DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 354 749 FL 020 947

AUTHOR	Allison, Desmond M., Ed.; Leung, Lily S. K., Ed.
TITLE	Hongkong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching, 14.
INSTITUTION	Hong Kong Univ. Language Centre.
REPORT NO	ISSN-1015-2059
PUB DATE	91
NOTE	110p.; For selected individual papers, see ED 322 749 and FL 020 948-954.
AVAILABLE FROM	Hongkong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching, The Language Centre, University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong ($4; check payable to the University of Hong Kong).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	Hongkong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching; v14 1991
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Chinese; College Students; Curriculum Development; Educational Strategies; *English (Second Language); English for Academic Purposes; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; High Schools; *Interlanguage; Language Research; Language Tests; *Linguistic Theory; *Listening Comprehension; Outcomes of Education; Postsecondary Education; Program Evaluation; *Reading Comprehension; Reading Difficulties; Secondary Education; Technical Writing; Testing; Test Validity; *Writing (Composition); Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS	*Hong Kong

ABSTRACT

Papers on linguistics and language teaching in this volume are the following: "'Good' and 'Poor' Writing and Writers: Studying Individual Performance as a Part of Test Validation" (Desmond Allison, Evelyn Cheung); "To Test or Not To Test: That Is the Question" (Keith Tong, Rose Chan, Jo Lewkowicz); "Testing Listening Comprehension: A New Approach?" (Jo Lewkowicz); "Misreading Viewpoints: Reading Problems Among ESL University Students in Hong Kong" (Desmond Allison, Ip Kung Sau); "Typological Transfer, Discourse Accent and the Chinese Writer of English" (Christopher Green); "An Evaluation Study of a Programme to Teach Student Report Writing" (Peggy Leung); "Prioritising Equality of Outcome in Hong Kong Secondary Education" (Nigel Bruce); and "Curriculum Development in the Sixth Form: the Potential for Changes in Approaches to Writing Skills at Tertiary Level" (Peter Falvey). Editorial policy, a style sheet, notes on contributors, and an index to papers in volumes 1-13 are also included. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED354749

14

Hongkong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

D. M. Allison

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

FL 020 947

University of Hong Kong, Language Centre
1991

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

HONGKONG PAPERS IN LINGUISTICS & LANGUAGE TEACHING
ISSUE 14 (1991)

Contents

Editorial Policy ... ii

Style Sheet ... iii

Contributors ... vi

Articles

"Good" and "Poor" Writing and Writers: Studying Individual Performance as a Part of Test Validation ... Desmond Allison & Evelyn Cheung 1

To Test or Not to Test: That is the Question ... Keith Tong, Rose Chan & Jo Lewkowicz 15

Testing Listening Comprehension: a New Approach? ... Jo Lewkowicz 25

Misreading Viewpoints: Reading Problems among ESL University Students in Hong Kong ... Desmond Allison & Ip Kung Sau 33

Typological Transfer, Discourse Accent and the Chinese Writer of English ... Christopher Green 51

An Evaluation Study of a Programme to Teach Standard Report Writing ... Peggy Leung 65

Prioritising Equality of Outcome in Hong Kong Secondary Education ... Nigel Bruce 81

Curriculum Development in the Sixth Form: the Potential for Changes in Approaches to Writing Skills at Tertiary Level... Peter Falvey 89

Contents of Hongkong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching, Numbers 1-13 ... 97

Errata (Issue 13)

Subscription Form

Linguistics, Language in Education and Educational Research: 1991-1992 Conferences

ISSN 1015-2059

Editors

Issue Editors: Desmond M. Allison
Lily S.K. Leung

General Editors: Angela C. Y. Y. Fok
Andrew T. Wright (acting)

Acknowledgements

The Editors are greatly indebted to Ms. Maria Chu for production work, and to Ms. Tracy Chan, Ms. Alice Cheng, Ms. Connie Kwok, Mrs. Alice Lee and Mr. C. K. Lee for assistance, as well as to the University Printing Unit.

Policy

Hongkong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching publishes work in a number of areas, including: general linguistics, language teaching methodology, evaluation of teaching materials, language curriculum development, language testing, educational technology, language and language teaching surveys, language planning, bilingual education. Articles on Chinese and Chinese language teaching may be published in Chinese.

Hongkong Papers is aimed primarily at Hong Kong but it is hoped that it may also be of interest to specialists in other parts of the world, especially in Asia.

Subscription

There is one issue per year. The cost for local subscribers is HK$30.00. For overseas subscribers the cost is US$5.00 including postage. If you are interested in ordering *Hongkong Papers*, please fill in the accompanying form and return it to The Editors. Cheques should be made payable to 'The Editors, Hongkong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching' and crossed.

Contributions

Contributions in the form of articles, reports, in-depth reviews or simply comments on earlier articles are welcome. They should conform to the style sheet on pages iii to v, and should be addressed to:

The Editors
Hongkong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching
c/o The Language Centre
University of Hong Kong
Hong Kong

Contributors will receive a complimentary copy of the issue and 10 offprints of their article.

Style Sheet

1. Manuscripts should be typewritten, preferably on A4 size paper. Typing should be double-spaced and on one side of the paper only. We also accept 3" or 5" floppy disks (preferably written using Microsoft Word, Wordstar, Wordstar 2000, Word Perfect or Multimate) for IBM PC or IBM PC-compatible machines.

2. Items to be italicised should have single underlining. These include the following:
   a. Section headings and subheadings.
   b. Words or phrases used as linguistic examples.
   c. Words or phrases given particularly strong emphasis.
   d. Titles of tables, graphs and other diagrams.
   e. Titles or headings of other books or journals referred to or cited.

3. Capitals (no underlining) should be used for the following:
   a. Title of your article or review (see 6. below). The author's name(s) should be in lower case.
   b. Headings of NOTES and REFERENCES sections.

4. Single inverted commas should be used for:
   a. A distancing device by the author (e.g. This is not predicted by Smith's 'theory'....).
   b. A method of highlighting the first mention of terms specially coined for the paper.
   c. The titles of articles quoted in the text or in the bibliography.

5. Double inverted commas should be used for verbatim quotations.

6. The first page should contain the title of the article at the top of the page, in capitals with the name of the author(s) immediately below and centred. A reasonable amount of blank space should separate these from the start of the text. Headings should be located at the left-hand side of the text. There should be two blank spaces between the subheading and the start of the first sentence of the text, which should be indented 5 spaces.

7. Tables and diagrams should each be numbered sequentially and their intended position in the text should be clearly indicated. Diagrams should be on separate sheets. All such graphic displays should have single underlining. Capitals should only be used for the initial letter of the word 'Table' or 'Diagram' and for the first word in the following sentence (e.g. Table 2. Distribution of responses).

8. Footnotes should not be used. Reference in the text should be to author's name, year of publication and, wherever applicable, page or pages referred to [e.g. "This is refuted by Smith (1978a: 33-5). However, several authors take a different view (Chan 1978:13; Green 1980)"].

9. Notes which require explanation should be indicated by superscript numerals in the body of the article and should be grouped together in a section headed NOTES (in capitals) at the end of the text. The number and quantity of notes should be kept to a minimum.

10. References should be listed in alphabetical order in a section headed REFERENCES (in capital letters), immediately following the NOTES section.

11. Journal articles should be referenced in the following way:
Oller, J. W. and Streiff, V. 1975. 'Dictation: A test of grammar-based expectancies'. *English Language Teaching Journal* 30/1: 25-36.

12. Books and pamphlets should be referenced in the following way:
Foss, B. (ed.) 1974. *New Perspectives in Child Development.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

13. Articles in books should be referenced in the following way:
Kvan, E. 1969. 'Problems of bilingual milieu in Hong Kong: Strain of the two-language system'. In Jarvie, I. C. and Agassi, J. (ed.) *Hong Kong: A Society in Transition*, pp. 327-343. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

中文稿件格式

用中文發表的稿件，請注意下列各要則：

(一) 來稿請用有格之原稿紙單面橫寫.

(二) 標點符號以通用者為主. 為排版方便，人名，地名，書名俱不加底線，
書名號請用 <<　　>> 式樣表示.

(三) 行文須要註釋者，請一律將註文附於篇末，並用 (1), (2) 等字樣
在文中標示.

(四) 引文請把作者姓名，出版年份，註明於括號內. 並把書目附入文獻參考.

(五) 附上的文獻參考書目，每條請用下列次序排列： 作者；出版年份；
書名或篇名；出版者；出版地.

例 ： 呂淑湘　　1981　　<<現代漢語八百詞>>
商務印書館　　北京.

李裕德　　1979　　主語能不能放在介詞結構當中，
刊於　<<中國語文>>　　1979 年第一期，頁 34 - 36.

(六) 中文稿件請附一頁英文內容撮要.

Contributors

Desmond Allison	Principal Language Instructor Language Centre University of Hong Kong
Nigel Bruce	Principal Language Instructor Language Centre University of Hong Kong
Rose Chan	Language Instructor Language Centre University of Hong Kong
Evelyn Cheung	Senior Language Instructor Language Centre University of Hong Kong
Peter Falvey	Senior Lecturer Department of Curriculum Studies University of Hong Kong
Christopher Green	Lecturer English Section Institute of Language in Education Hong Kong
Ip Kung Sau	Language Instructor Language Centre University of Hong Kong
Peggy Leung	Lecturer English Department Hong Kong Polytechnic
Jo Lewkowicz	Senior Language Instructor Language Centre University of Hong Kong
Keith Tong	Senior Language Instructor Language Centre Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

HONGKONG PAPERS IN LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE TEACHING 14 (1991) ISSN 1015-2059

"GOOD" AND "POOR" WRITING AND WRITERS: STUDYING INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE AS A PART OF TEST VALIDATION

Desmond Allison and Evelyn Cheung[1]
University of Hong Kong

1. Introduction

Our paper sets out to investigate issues of test validation by placing them in a context. It examines the ways in which instances of "good" and "poor" writing have been identified in the marking of part of a writing test that is given each year to incoming Arts Faculty students at the University of Hong Kong. It also looks at overall performances of "good" and "poor" writers. Implications concern content validity of the test and uses to which its results are put.

1.1 Assessing Writing in English for Academic Purposes

Our aim in this section is to establish a working perspective for our study. We do not attempt to review the large and growing body of literature on assessment of written English, but confine ourselves to commenting on some familiar questions that are also important for our purposes.

The much-discussed tension between reliability and validity (Davies 1978; cf. Morrow 1981: 13) in language testing is highly evident in the assessment of writing. Let us assume a context in which second language learners are preparing to use English for study purposes, over a wide range of academic subjects. To test the writing abilities of these learners, whether for initial placement purposes or as end-of-course assessment, it is necessary among other things to ensure that (i) a representative range of abilities and tasks is covered; (ii) test marks and grades arise from criteria that are clear and not arbitrary; (iii) information from the test can be interpreted as needed (e.g. for purposes of course evaluation, or for statements about a learner's writing abilities). These issues of principle raise many problems, and have also to be reconciled with practical constraints in the testing situation.

a. *Coverage*

The issue of what abilities a writing test is testing calls for both a priori and post hoc validation of test content and of the underlying construct. In a useful discussion (not confined to tests of writing), Weir (1988: 21-25), following Anastasi (1982: 132), affirms that content validity depends upon the relevance of the individual's test responses to the abilities a test seeks to measure. Simple inspection of test content cannot suffice to establish content validity.[2] Weir also points out that, while statistical data can certainly contribute to our awareness of the construct underlying a test, such data do not come with ready-made conceptual labels. Instead, findings need to be interpreted, in the light of whatever theory we have at our disposal.

The specific abilities or knowledge that a writing test may measure will depend, then, both on the range of tasks set and the ways in which individuals respond to these tasks. We would like immediately to draw attention to work by Cumming (1989) that offers a two-factor account of some second-language writing test data in terms of (i) L2 proficiency and (ii) writing expertise. "Writing expertise" here relates to qualities of discourse organisation, and of content selection and control in response to (complex) demands of the writing task, and is distinct from lexicogrammatical "proficiency". It is relevant to our discussion to ask how far any test of written English in a second language context draws, and should draw, on each of these hypothesised traits.

b. *Marking Criteria*

Designing representative writing tasks that can also be reliably graded is clearly a challenging activity. For one thing, concern for reliability cannot be satisfied by eliminating subjectivity from the assessment procedure. Gannon (1985: 39) argues convincingly (in our view) that objective assessment of writing can only be achieved by limiting oneself to trivial or very detailed aspects of writing. We believe Gannon's line of argument holds good in a second-language context, especially if we aim to test writing expertise as well as English language proficiency.

How can subjective marking be made reliable and valid? Current wisdom in this domain (also in oral testing) appears to promote the use of rating scales that draw upon a complex range of criteria yet assign a single mark on the scale. For example, West (1989) presents scales used by two leading examining boards in Britain - the Cambridge Syndicate Marking Scale and Oxford Delegacy Scale. West claims that the use of these scales helps examiners not only to ensure inter-marker reliability on one task but also to "overcome one of the great problems when testing writing: how to compare scripts from different tasks?" On the other hand, White (1985: 18-33) advocates that "holistic scoring" be carried out according to criteria that are developed for each particular essay question and which are interpreted according to the particular group that is tested.[3]

c. *Interpretability*

If rating scales are interpreted very differently, then reliability problems may persist. However, high reliability in itself does not guarantee validity. High agreement among raters can still leave us with problems in suggesting just what constructs underlie the written performance - and indeed the assessments by different raters.

1.2 Assessing Writing in One Context

We shall pursue these language testing concerns in the context of a group of tests that are administered annually by the Language Centre of the University of Hong Kong to some 400 incoming students of the Faculty of Arts. These tests are given in what are called 'Language Analysis Sessions', and are generally known as "the L.A.S. tests". Separate tests are given for each of the "four skills" (For an outline of the four tests, see Fok 1985: 127-129).

Our focus is on the L.A.S. Writing test, and in fact on one of this test's five sections or 'subtests'. An account of the L.A.S. Writing test and of its rationale, which relates to the demands of a tutorial paper on students' writing abilities, can be found in Low (1982). While various modifications to the test and marking scheme have continued to be made, the basic form of the test remains unchanged.

In brief, the test provides for continuity of topic across a range of tasks. The theme of the paper is on the changes brought about by modernization in a small Chinese village called Ma Lin. The five subtests and tasks are:

1. Proofread (the introduction, which sets out terms and scope of the paper). 2. Write text (from pictures): describe change over time (what has happened to the village). 3. Write text (from note cards); 4. Structure an argument (multiple choice): apply two viewpoints concerning change to sample village. 5. Edit text (a draft conclusion) in light of a reader's comments (re formality and re validity of conclusions).

We shall describe subtest 2 in a little more detail, for reasons that will become clear. In this subtest, the student has to demonstrate his/her linguistic and rhetorical ability to handle the notion of change. Minimal input to the writing task is provided through graphic information showing an agriculturally based village beside the sea. The second picture is rather different, with the area looking more industrialized and populated. In both diagrams, the pictures are labelled to prevent any misinterpretation of what they are supposed to symbolize.

The marking scheme for the L.A.S. Writing test is fully objective for subtest 4 (multiple choice); almost so, for subtest 1 (proofread for error in each line of the text); and subtest 5 (edit parts of the text that have been marked). Alternative possibilities over the years for subtest 1 and 5 have been itemized as acceptable or not. Subtests 2 and 3 involve impression marking, guided by a set of criteria. Four of the five subtests are marked by single markers following the marking scheme; subtest 2 is the exception.

For subtest 2, a total of four markers are involved (in some years six markers): two pairs of markers with each pair marking half the scripts. Markers' meetings before the test allow each pair to discuss a number of sample scripts that they have marked and to ensure some comparability of standards. Actual test papers are compared in cases of serious discrepancy only, as the timescale for the whole operation is exceedingly tight.

Subtest 2 appears to be the most open-ended. Despite a possible challenge from subtest 3, subtest 2 is in our view the most "writing-like" part of the Writing Test. As we shall see, the subtest has also given rise to some problems during validation studies. We decided to explore this subtest further.

1.3 Validation of the Writing Test

Validation of this test hitherto has been in terms of statistical analysis and interpretation of (a) test results; (b) test-taker attitudes as measured by a post-test questionnaire. Work now planned or in progress aims to supplement and enrich these analyses through (c) more attention to individual test performances (this paper being one contribution here) and (d) interviews with test-takers (planned for 1990).

Without going into great detail, we would like to comment on a few of the findings reported by Lee and Low (1982) with respect to test results.

Lee and Low report a two-factor solution for their test results. They interpret this solution in terms of the relevance of grammatical considerations (but not of extended context) for the two subtests (1 and 3) that load highly on Factor 1, and of the relevance of extended context (but not of a focus on grammar) for the two subtests (4 and 5) that load highly on Factor 2. We have earlier remarked upon the difficulty of assigning conceptual labels to the outcome of a statistical analysis. Let us note here that the relevance of "extended context" to test-taker responses cannot be established solely by pointing to the fact that subtests 4 and 5 occur in the latter part of the test paper.

The omission of subtest 2 from the account is worth noting. Lee and Low report that subtest 2 "had a high error variance (.24) and behaved in a strange way". They therefore decided to omit it from further calculations in their factor analysis. Low (1982: 256) also admits to "some problems with inter-marker reliability" for this subtest, although the reliability coefficient (alpha) of .76 reported by Lee and Low (note 2) appears to us to be respectable given the nature of the task.

We suggest therefore that subtest 2 is an interesting instance of reliability-validity tension. The test appears to be a valid writing task for the testees, but has some reliability problems that limit validity. Since the Lee and Low study, there has been revision of a few items in subtest 4 and 5 and minor changes in the wording of the instructions in subtest 2. The overall rationale of the test however, has remained the same. An attempt to factor analyse the 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989 results, following the procedures adopted by Low (Principal Component Analysis with varimax rotation), suggests that the test is giving us different information now. The results will be discussed later in another section.

2. Aims of the Study

The overall aim is to extend the study of performance on L.A.S. Writing Subtest 2, and to analyse it in terms of the Writing test as a whole. On the face of it, subtest 2 is a more direct test of writing ability. For this very reason, it may give rise to some of the difficulties incurred by standard essay questions, which include the difficulty of telling "what any given mark actually means" (Low 1982: 51).

The main aims of the study are to look into individual performance in greater detail, in order to throw more light on the question of what given marks may mean. We are particularly interested in the writers who were identifiable, in terms of their subtest 2 performance, as being well above or well below average. We shall henceforth use "good" and "poor", in double quotes, as labels for two groups of writers that are defined operationally in each year by the subtest scores (Please see Methods section for details). Whether, to what extent and why these value labels are actually appropriate is what our study is all about.

Two broad questions are: What (possibly quite varied) features of writing could be identified as characteristic of (some or all of) these "good" and "poor" writers? And how did the individual writers, whether "good" or "poor", actually fare in terms of the writing test as a whole?

The choice of lexical, grammatical and discourse features of writing to be examined will be taken up in the Methods section.

A final and very important aim is to evaluate our findings. We shall seek a better understanding of what abilities our chosen subtest actually measures; of whether it does so as clearly and reliably as one would wish; and of whether abilities that are not receiving credit in the marking of the subtest should be given more attention in the marking scheme (either within the subtest or elsewhere in the Writing test).[4]

3. Methods

3.1 Choice of Scripts

We decided to work with selected scripts from two years (1987 and 1989. Plans to include 1988 scripts were set aside because of time restrictions).

As ours is not primarily a statistical study, we are not concerned with equivalence of sample size either within one year or across the two years in the study. Instead, we have chosen to consider as "poor" all scripts receiving the lowest mark on the rating scale (a five point scale) from at least one marker. In practice, this means that the other marker had either also given the lowest mark or a rating one interval above the lowest mark. Similarly, we define "good" as receiving the highest mark from at least one marker (and, in practice, the highest or highest but one mark from the other marker).

This initially yields figures as follows (with 1988 also included):

Table 1: Total number of "Good" and "Poor" scripts

	"Good" scripts	"Poor" scripts
1987	8	40
1988	12	24
1989	10	20

It appears generally to be common practice that examiners prove reluctant to use the top band on a scale, even when they are encouraged to use the full range in their marking (North 1990). In the present study, the imbalance between "good" and "poor" for 1987 was so great that we decided first to select scripts which received the lowest mark from both markers (17 scripts) and then select at random another 6 scripts which received the lowest mark from one marker, with the second marker giving the mark which is one interval higher. All "good" scripts for 1987, and all scripts in both categories for 1989, were included in the study.

For reference in this paper, scripts are coded by year (87 or 89); by category (G="Good", P="Poor"); and by an arbitrary number for each individual. Since students do not have access to their subtest grades, confidentiality is preserved by this procedure.

3.2 Descriptive Categories

Determining what these categories should be formed an important part of the study. As for testing, so possibly for research itself: objective categories are demonstrable but can be trivial, while more in-depth qualitative assessment of individual writing, however perceptive, will raise problems of verifiability or agreement. Taylor (1986) makes a strong case for detailed study of individual scripts (which he exemplifies) rather than error surveys. For test validation purposes, however, one would need to study quite a number of individuals and still seek some form of generalisability of statement.

We therefore decided to look at the selected scripts using objective measures; to adopt any qualitative assessment where appropriate; and to follow this by a descriptive account of generalisable features, with examples for illustration. For convenience, we list the categories under three headings: lexis, grammar, and discourse.

3.3 Objective Measures

a. *Lexis*

We decided to do the following: 1) count the number of words (word tokens) as a measure of text length 2) count the number of word types (eg. 'was'; 'are' are counted as one type) 3) calculate type/token ratio as a measure of lexical repetition.

b. *Grammar*

The T-unit is adopted as a measure of syntactic complexity (one main clause with any subordinate clauses). We decided to count the number of T-units; the number of error-free T-units; the average length in words of T-units and of error-free T-units. Length of error-free T-units is typically a better predictor of test performance (Larsen-Freeman 1978; Lim 1983).

c. *Discourse*

We decided to count the number of paragraphs and note the presence of a recognizable introduction and conclusion.

3.4 Qualitative Assessments

We are interested also to assess the quality of the introduction, conclusion, as well as the 'development' of ideas throughout the piece of writing. An impression mark was given using a 3-point scale: 'good'; 'OK'; 'poor'. Zero mark was given for the absence of an introduction and conclusion. (By these, we mean some introductory or concluding statements at what we took to be a suitable level of generality).

3.5 Statistical Correlations

We are interested in the simple correlation between the five subtests; and between the total writing mark and each of the subtest for 1987 and 1989. Simple correlation was also computed between the two marks for subtest 2. As mentioned earlier, factor analysis was performed on the five subtests for the four years from 1986 to 1989.

It is clear to us that objective and evaluative information needs to be integrated so that useful and meaningful statements can be made. With regard to lexis, type/token ratios have served to draw our attention to individual scripts that have comparatively frequent instances of repetition. Effectiveness of such instances has been evaluated, and one or two cases are reported below. Another one of our descriptive aims is to focus on a small group of lexical items that are related to the notion of change, which is central to subtest 2. We decided to look at how the lexical items "change"; "replace"; "turn"; and "develop" are used in each script. This involves grammatical considerations. We are also interested, at the discoursal level, to look at how connectors are used to link ideas together. We shall report on all this in the Discussion section.

4. Findings

4.1 Quantitative Survey of Scripts (Table 2; Table 3)

Although the mean scores are fairly crude measures, they tend to support existing research and teacher comments that "good" writers on average would write longer texts than "poor" writers, and would make fewer errors. The difference in the average length of error-free T-units appears to be more pronounced than that in the average length of T-units in the two groups in 1989, but not in 1987. We are aware, of course, that the unequal number of samples between the "good" and "poor" scripts inhibits us from making too strong a claim about trends that have emerged.

The difference in the number of paragraphs appears to be negligible, as both groups tend to use more than a paragraph. It is difficult to interpret the average mark for introduction and conclusion in table 2, because the number of students in 1987 who wrote an introduction and a conclusion is small. However, it is worth noting that more students in the "poor" group (14 out of 23. or 60.9%) wrote a conclusion compared to the "good" group (2 out of 8 or 25%). The average mark for 'development' again seems to show that the "good" group scored higher.

Table 2: Mean scores of 1987 scripts

	L(W)	T/T	TU	W/TU	EFTU	%EF	W/EFT	Pa	Int	Con	Dev
Good	210	.58	15.3	14.1	11.3	73	13.3	2.1	1.0	0.5	2.5
Poor	171	.58	15.3	11.4	5.7	38	10.8	2.0	0.5	0.8	1.4

Table 3: Mean scores of 1989 scripts

	L(W)	T/T	TU	W/TU	EFTU	%EF	W/EFT	Pa	Int	Con	Dev
Good	204	.56	14.4	14.7	11	78	14.7	2.7	1.2	1.0	1.8
Poor	163	.56	12.7	13.0	3.9	32	10.7	2.2	1.0	0.6	1.3

KEY: L(W): length in token words; T/T: token/type ratio; TU: T-unit count; W/TU: average T-unit length in words; EFTU: error-free T-unit count; %EF: percentage of error-free T-units; W/EFT: average length of error-free T-unit; Pa: paragraph count; Int: mark given to introduction; Con: mark given to conclusion; Dev: mark given to development.

4.2 Percentile Ranking

For 1987, 5 of the 8 "good" scripts are the work of the students above the ninetieth percentile. Two scored above the eightieth percentile and the last one near the margin of the eightieth (79.5). As for the "poor" scripts, 7 of the 23 scripts were the work of students scoring below the tenth percentile. Of the remaining 16, one scored above the sixtieth percentile; two more above the fortieth percentile; another three above the thirtieth percentile; three more above the twentieth percentile; and seven more above the tenth percentile.

For 1989, 8 of the 10 "good" scripts on subtest 2 are the work of students scoring above the ninetieth percentile on the Writing test (including the two highest scorers on the test). The other two students were ranked at the 87th and 79th percentile. As for the "poor" scripts, 13 of the 20 scripts were written by students scoring below the tenth percentile (including the two lowest scorers on the test). Of the remaining cases, one scored above the eightieth percentile; a second also scored above the fortieth percentile; a third above the thirtieth percentile; and two more above the twentieth percentile.

It appears that if a student does well on subtest 2, it is highly likely that s/he would perform well on the test as a whole. However, with the "poor" scripts, the picture is less clear. While about 60% of the students in both years rank below the bottom twentieth percentile, the rest could range above the twentieth to the eightieth percentile.

4.3 Simple Correlations

Table 4: Overall correlation between mark 1 and mark 2 for subtest 2

1987	.72	(p < .01)
1988	.59	(p < .01)
1989	.63	(p < .01)

Table 5: Correlation among the subtests; and between the writing total and the subtests for 1987

Subtest	1	2	3	4	5	
1		.32	.25	.37	.34	
2			.24	.27	.15	
3				.17	.09	(p < .01)
4					.27	
5						
Total:	.70	.62	.63	.62	.57	

Table 6: Correlation among the subtests; and between the writing total and the subtests for 1989

Subtest	1	2	3	4	5	
1		.42	.37	.36	.22	
2			.29	.24	.15	
3				.18	.16	(p < .01)
4					.32	
5						
Total	.72	.64	.64	.64	.60	

4.4 Factor Analysis

Table 7: Results of factor analysis of the writing test (varimax rotation) for 1987

	1987		
	Factor 1	Communality	Percentage of Variance
Subtest 1	.757	.573	40.2
Subtest 2	.624	.389	19.1
Subtest 3	.500	.250	15.3
Subtest 4	.684	.468	13.7
Subtest 5	.574	.329	11.8

Table 8: Results of factor analysis of the writing test (varimax rotation) for 1989

	1989		
	Factor 1	Communality	Percentage of Variance
Subtest 1	.775	.601	42.1
Subtest 2	.662	.439	19.4
Subtest 3	.612	.375	14.9
Subtest 4	.648	.420	13.1
Subtest 5	.519	.270	10.5

Although the results of four years from 1986 to 1989 were factor analysed, only the results for 1987 and 1989 are shown here. In the four years, only one factor could be extracted. (This remained the case when the analysis was repeated after excluding subtest 2, to ensure exact comparability with the procedure followed by Lee and Low (1982)).

5. Discussion

5.1 Subtest 2 and the L.A.S. Writing Test

The correlations between the two sets of marks for subtest 2 (Table 4) indicate that obtaining high inter-marker reliability remains a problem. Interestingly, this problem persists despite revision of the marking scale. Although "rough justice" is done in that all marks given on the five-point scale correspond to within one band (i.e. the second mark is the same as, or one above, or one below the first mark in any case), it appears that markers are operating with rather different practices that may reflect differences in their constructs of what constitutes "good" or "poor" performance on the task. Further study of this issue would have to examine scripts taken from "the middle" of the distribution.

Results from the factor analysis for the four years suggests that there is a common factor between subtests and all other factors are specific factors. Each subtest therefore can be assumed to measure rather different aspects of language skills. In the four years, subtest 1 is the most predominant. The results here are supported by simple correlations in Tables 5 and 6. The writing total correlates positively and significantly, although not very highly, with each of the subtests. However, there are very low correlations among the subtests.

It was mentioned earlier that it was easier to predict a higher total mark for students who performed well in subtest 2, but that the converse does not always hold among the "poor" scripts. What seems to stand out now is that subtest 1, which is the explicit grammatical component of the test is comparatively a better predictor of the overall writing test score. (Note the higher correlation coefficient for total and subtest 1 in both years). Similarly, analysis of the scripts of subtest 2 also suggests that the "good" scripts have comparatively fewer lexicogrammatical errors (Tables 2 and 3).

Part-whole correlations and inter-subtest correlations do not suggest that subtest 2 is markedly unusual (though admittedly this information is not very refined). The tendency for moderate correlations with subtest 1 may reflect an element of "knowledge of the L2/grammatical accuracy" in the marking of subtest

5.2 Measures of Individual Performance

Comparison of the mean scores for "Good" and "Poor" categories in the same year gives few surprises. With the exception of type/token ratio (and of identical number of T-units per essay in 1987), means are consistently higher for the "Good" group. The difference in both years is most marked for absolute numbers of error-free T-units (EFTs) per essay. The status of 'average length of EFTs' as a better predictor than 'average length of T-units' for performance on the writing test (cf. Lim 1983: 42) receives support from our 1989 but not our 1987 data.

Type/token ratio is the same for both groups in 1987 and also in 1989. The range, however, is greater for the "Poor" group, from a low of .49 to a high of .70 (two cases) in 1987. The same holds true for 1989, with a range of .44 to .66 (two cases). This reflects two kinds of text: scripts of length comparable to the "Good" group but with rather less lexicogrammatical variety (ie. with more repetition) and hence a low type/token ratio, and very short scripts in which there is less lexical repetition and hence a high type/token ratio (It is worth noting that grammatical as well as lexical considerations affect outcomes here).

We note that type/token ratio is not an effective measure of expressivity or of explaining why one text is better than another in terms of lexical choice (Carter, 1987: 89). However, we find that the type/token data provides an additional reason for examining and comparing certain scripts, and for checking somewhat unusual features of individual scripts within the "poor" and "good" sample.

While there may be a tendency for teachers to approve of lexical variation (suggesting a wider range of available vocabulary), and while this is to some extent reflected in the marking scheme (e.g. ways of signalling "change"), it should be stressed that lexical limitations appear not so much in the amount of repetition as in the uses to which repetition is put. In one "poor" script (87P21), the word "village" is repeated nine times. In this case, the repeated use of the word did not help to clarify the situation being described. Its overuse created a sense of redundancy instead. A "good" script (87G1) however, with a somewhat similar type/token ratio, used the word "village" seven times, (in a comparatively longer text, 261 words compared to 163), and used the word rather more effectively.

> **The walled village which was the people's main dwelling in the past has become a model village mainly for tourist attraction. The village has become a modern town with various economic activities.**

In the three instances here, the lexical repetition provides a framework for a developing argument. Each use of "village" is distinctive. The former "walled village" is now a "model village", and "the village", Ma Lin has become a modern town. The repetition here contributes to coherence.

The listing of the lexemes of "CHANGE" is to some extent arbitrary, (since there are many indirect signals, such as tense shift or lexical contrast that were not looked at) but the procedures are consistent and still informative. The lexemes change, replace, turn and develop in the context of subtest 2 share this notion of 'current relevance' and of a state of affairs moving gradually from one state to another. Most students used the word change in various grammatical forms in their text and to a lesser extent, replace, turn and develop.

Examination of the occurrences of change as a verb among the "good" scripts in 1987 and 1989 show that in all twelve occurrences (100%), it was used in the present perfect tense. Among the "poor" scripts this tense accounted for 12 occurrences out of a total of 37 (32.4%), and the rest were either in the past simple, present simple, past perfect (once) or present progressive (once). The notion of change in subtest 2 is much more adequately captured using 'dynamic' verbs, which include the few above, in the present perfect form. As far as the word 'change' is concerned, the "good" scripts are consistent in using the present perfect tense, and are probably rewarded for it.

It has long been recognized that improving the range of vocabulary of a second language learner is most effectively done in context, so that the collocational field of the word is also perceived. Our feeling is that while lexical variety is evident in most of the scripts, errors in collocation (and grammar) meant that lexical range per se did not necessarily receive credit from markers.

It is revealing to find that "good" students as well as "poor" students produced a number of anomalous sentences, as in the examples below :

(87G1) ... **rice fields have been** changed into large and modern factories.
(89G10) **The rice fields on the hillside have been changed into factories.**
(89G6) ... **the fields and gardens have turned into factories.**
(89G2) ... **the rice fields have been replaced by noisy factories.**

Writers of both the "poor" and "good" scripts in the sample do not appear to be sensitive to the inappropriacy of seeing rice fields turn into factories. A possible explanation for this recurring feature may be traced to interference from L1. Direct translation equivalents in Chinese prove to be more acceptable.

With regard to grammar, our findings on average length of T-units also drew attention to unusual scripts in each of our categories. There was one striking instance (89G10) of a "good" script that exhibited quite high control over a very limited grammatical range (no major subordinate clauses). Conversely, some of the "poor" writers attempted more complex grammatical structures that they proved unable to control, as in the following example.

> (89P16) **As mentioned above, we will have a case study on Ma Lin, as an example, to show have modernization has changed an traditional agricultural village to an industrial town from 1950s to the present.**

We did not attempt any systematic categorization of grammatical errors within the time available to us. We noticed that form class errors were frequent among the "poor" scripts (e.g. "an industry town"; "agriculture life"; "agricultured"), but were rare among the "good" scripts.

An attempt at describing the discoursal competence of the students was through evaluating the introduction, the conclusion and overall development in the sample texts. We interpreted introduction to mean any 'advance organizer' which gives an overall perspective of change seen from the present or in transition and/or which referred to Ma Lin as an example of the process of change. The instructions regarding subtest 2 are explicit about the purpose of the task, which is to describe physical changes and then socioeconomic changes, but it is left open to the students how they would like to structure the text. In both years only about 50% of the scripts contain introductions. Introductions which merited a '3' are not only found among the "good" scripts, but also among the "poor" ones. In the following example, taken from among the "poor" scripts, the student demonstrates that he can write an introduction, but grammatical inaccuracies and poor development of ideas in the rest of the text possibly affected his final mark.

> (89P8) **Ma Lin, an agricultural village in the 1950's. But now, it become a tourist attraction. Let us see how does this village changed in this short period.**

See also the example (89P16) we cited earlier as an instance of attempted grammatical complexity.

Similarly, conclusions are found only in about 50% of the scripts in both years. Compared to introductions, the quality of conclusions is lower. This seems to reflect a general trend among both "good" and "poor" scripts.

Discoursal skills are not only demonstrated through elaborate advance signals at the beginning of the text or through a satisfactory concluding statement. Achieving coherence is attempted through a number of ways. Some students rationalize the changes in Ma Lin through a chain of cause and effect events. Others depend heavily on the use of connectors to move from one subject to another. "Good" scripts generally cover the topic adequately, with very few irrelevant elaborations. There are many cases of misuse of connectors, especially 'moreover' and 'on the other hand' in both "good" and "poor" scripts which warrant further careful study. An example to illustrate this can be found in a "good" script.

> (87G2) **In the early 1950's, Ma Lin was only a traditional village. People living there mainly engaged in the primary activities such as fishing since Ma Lin is near to the coastal areas. Besides, with the presence of lowland, so the villagers also engaged in the activities of market gardening, that was, the growing of vegetables and flowers as well as growing paddy .... On the other hand , Ma Lin was a walled village since it locates near the coastal areas, thus the whole village was surrounded by the wall.**
>
> ...

There seems to be a higher marker tolerance for inadequate signalling inter-sententially, as long as ideas flow reasonably smoothly in the overall comparative description of change. Writers who made errors at this level and who compensated by not making too many grammatical errors elsewhere are not penalized.

The demands of this writing task upon discourse awareness and organisational abilities are not in fact particularly elaborate. Some of the writers explicitly organised their material in terms of such dichotomies as "economic" and "social" change, or of "physical" changes and changes in "occupation". Such overt structuring of text was by no means confined to "good" writers in the study. Indeed, some of the "poor" writers were quite sophisticated in this respect.

6. Conclusion

What can be learned from all these observations and comments? At this point in our paper, we face the two dangers of offering rash and over-generalised conclusions or of venturing remarks that are so tentative as to be worthless. At the risk of folly, we shall state our conclusions firmly. We do so on the understanding that our investigation of how individual performance was assessed in this test forms part of a wider appraisal of the test's validity, and that the conclusions we propose are inferred from our observations rather than being demonstrated beyond all dispute. In addition, our comments on research methods remain impressionistic.

Our conclusions relate to the content validity of the writing test in the study, the uses to which its results are put, and the implications of the study for test validation as such.

The L.A.S. Writing test provides a fairly wide range of tasks and may appear to achieve a reasonable overall compromise between demands of reliability and those of validity. Our study shows, however, that the grading of individual scripts, on what is ostensibly a subtest concerned with continuous writing, in fact largely reflects the writers' lexicogrammatical proficiency in English. Ability to organise and develop a piece of writing - what Cumming (1989) considers as "writing expertise" - is not noticeably credited in the test. It is also clear that abilities to sustain a complex argument, e.g. in a term paper, are not assessed by the test. The distinction that the test makes between "good" and "poor" writing is consequently restricted in its scope.

The extent to which this limitation is a problem for content validity depends partly on the uses to which results are put, since these uses are relevant to the choice of what to test in the first place. On the one hand, the "poor" writers identified by the test plainly need to develop their proficiency in written English. On the other hand, the courses to which Arts students have been assigned in recent years also place considerable emphasis on helping students to meet the discourse demands of academic communication. Yet discourse abilities or disabilities have not appreciably contributed to the placement of students in terms of these courses. The extent of individual learners' problems with local or global information structure in producing academic text is an issue that the test at present fails to address. At the very least, this discrepancy calls for careful evaluation within the Language Centre, both in terms of what we expect of our tests and of what student needs our courses should principally aim to meet.

Some of the methodological benefits of the study are intangible. Clearly we have examined individual scripts in more detail and more systematically than is normally possible when marking, and certainly when marking test scripts. This has given us a better feel for some of the qualities and limitations in the writing produced under test conditions. Among the practical consequences are that we can select scripts that would repay particular attention in markers' meetings. We can also document the persistence of reliability problems in marking. We can thus argue for a more sustained approach in future towards achieving greater marking consistency. There needs to be a more rigorous institutional procedure both for realising a marking scheme and for ensuring that interpretations of this scheme converge among individual markers.

The study of individual test scripts has commended itself to colleagues and is being extended to validation of another writing test. We feel the approach could also usefully be applied to studies of how individual markers categorise scripts as particularly "good" or "poor".

The limitations of such work will be apparent. The choice of descriptive categories will depend on the researchers' evaluation of the writing task and doubtless on other considerations such as main research interests. While we make no apology for our own interest in lexis, we recognise that other researchers might have found useful information from a closer look at grammatical categories in our data. The danger here is that we all find what we are looking for, and overlook other potentially useful information. Provided, however, that work of this nature is undertaken to supplement rather than to replace other approaches, we maintain that it offers vital information in the validation of open-ended tests.

NOTES

1. Authors' names in alphabetical order. This paper was presented at the RELC conference on Language Testing and Language Programme Evaluation (Singapore, April 1990) and has been included in the ERIC database.

2. For courses in English for academic purposes, we follow Hughes (1988: 42) in basing "content" on course objectives rather than on the syllabus and materials through which a course attempts to meet these objectives. The relevance of learner responses (processes as well as products) will be apparent in such a perspective.

3. White also describes detailed procedures by which meaningful holistic marking can be undertaken successfully in one context. These procedures sound admirable, but are also clearly demanding in terms of time and manpower. We plan to explore their feasibility within the Language Centre.

4. With regard to abilities that may not receive sufficient credit, compare a suggestion by Low (1982: 256, note 4) that more attention be given to the transitions made between different parts of the tutorial test paper).

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank our colleagues, Lily Leung and Jo Lewkowicz for contributing to the selection of descriptive categories used in this study.

REFERENCES

Anastasi, Anne 1982. *Psychological Testing.* New York and London: Collier Macmillan.

Carter, Ronald 1987. *Vocabulary: Applied Linguistic Perspectives.* London: Allen and Unwin. (Aspects of English).

Cumming, Alister 1989. 'Writing Expertise and Second Language Proficiency'. *Language Learning* 39/1: 81-141.

Davies, Alan 1978. 'Language Testing'. *Language Teaching and Linguistics Abstracts* 11/3 and 11/4.

Fok, C.Y.Y. Angela 1985. 'Language Proficiency and Related Factors'. In Lee et. al. (eds.) *New Directions in Language Testing*, pp. 127-135. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Gannon, Peter 1985. *Assessing Writing: Principles and Practice of Marking Written English.* London: Edward Arnold.

Hughes, Arthur 1988. 'Achievement and proficiency: the missing link?' In Hughes, A. (ed.) *Testing English for University Study, ELT Documents 127*, pp. 36-42. Oxford: Modern English Publications (with British Council).

Larsen-Freeman, Diane 1978. 'An ESL index of development'. *TESOL Quarterly* 12/4: 439-448.

Lee Yick Pang and Low, Graham 1982. 'Towards a Classification of Tests of Language Use: The Dimension of Test Directness'. *Journal of Applied Language Study* 1/1: 17-28.

Lim Ho Peng 1983. 'Using T-unit Measures to Assess Writing Proficiency of University ESL Students'. *RELC Journal* 14/2: 35-43.

Low, Graham 1982. 'The Direct Testing of Academic Writing in a Second Language'. *System* 10/3: 247-257.

Morrow, Keith 1981. 'Communicative language testing: revolution or evolution?' In Alderson, J.C. and A. Hughes (eds.) *Issues in Language Testing, ELT Documents 111.* London: British Council.

North, Brian 1990. 'The Assessment of Writing'. *IATEFL Newsletter* 106, Jan.: 6.

Taylor, Gordon 1986. 'Errors and Explanations'. *Applied Linguistics* 7/2: 144-166.

Weir, Cyril 1988. *Communicative Language Testing.* Exeter: University of Exeter.

West, Richard 1989. 'The Testing of Writing'. *Testing* (Newsletter of the IATEFL Special Interest Group on Testing), no. 5, November.

White, Edward M. 1985. *Teaching and Assessing Writing.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

HONGKONG PAPERS IN LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE TEACHING 14 (1991) ISSN 1015-2059

TO TEST OR NOT TO TEST, THAT IS THE QUESTION

Keith Tong
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Rose Chan & Jo Lewkowicz
University of Hong Kong

Introduction

In 1989 the Hong Kong Examinations Authority (HKEA) introduced the new Use of English examination. The specific objectives of the examination were to:

> ... test the ability of the candidates to understand and use English as might be required in tertiary education and/or future employment. (HKEA, 1987: 2)

The examination sets out to test candidates' ability to:

> (i) understand and interpret spoken English as it might be encountered in academic and vocational situations;
>
> (ii) write clear, concise and grammatical English in an appropriate style;
>
> (iii) demonstrate both global and detailed understanding of a variety of written texts;
>
> (iv) integrate reading, writing and study skills in the pursuance of task-based/problem solving activities. (HKEA, ibid)

The examination was therefore designed to test candidates' readiness to use English in tertiary education and employment. Its development raised the question: would the examination results give sufficient information to determine whether students entering tertiary level education needed further English programmes to facilitate their academic studies? If so, there would appear to be no need to retest students at the beginning of their university career.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the content and predictive validity of the new Use of English examination. More specifically, it set out to find out whether the examination could be relied on for determining students' language needs on entering tertiary education. Since prior to the introduction of the new UE examination institutions such as the University of Hong Kong (HKU) had developed their own placement/proficiency tests for this purpose, it was important to find out whether these internal tests would continue to be necessary.

The comprehensive battery of tests developed by the Language Centre of HKU to assess Faculty of Arts students is known as the Language Analysis Sessions (LAS). These tests cover all four language skills and are therefore time-consuming to administer and mark. However, when the tests were validated in the mid-1980's (Fok, 1985), they were found to have better predictive power than the old (pre-1989) Use of English examination in terms of students' end-of-first-year results in their academic studies. They were also found to be superior in terms of face validity, since they reflected more closely the language skills required of the students in their academic work. They were not only seen by the students but also by the academic staff of the Faculty of Arts as reflecting the tasks demanded of the first year students. There was therefore every justification for administering the tests.

There was also a further reason for administering the LAS test to students of the Faculty of Arts. These students were originally assigned to courses addressing specific language skill areas. For example, students found to be weak in spoken English but strong on reading and writing were assigned to an Oral course, while those weak in all skills were assigned to the Integrated Language Skills course. Experience showed, however, that arbitrary decisions often had to be taken as to the course most suitable for individual students as there was rarely a clear-cut distinction between those weak in one or two skills as opposed to all four skills. On the basis of this finding, and the recognition that students, however good they may be in English, may still require English enhancement to maximize the benefits they accrue from their university studies, the Language Centre decided to streamline the courses it offered the Faculty of Arts students. At present it runs one course known as the English for Arts Students (EAS) course. This development is in line with current university thinking on English enhancement, which not only supports the extension of English programmes but is also moving towards making such courses credit-bearing. However, it weakens the case for testing on entry to university since the results are no longer needed for placement, but only for determining those students who are eligible for exemption from the course.

Comparison of Tests in the Study

In order to see whether the two tests under consideration, that is the UE and LAS, were indeed comparable, a detailed study of each subtest was undertaken. This, as can be seen from the brief descriptions of the subtests below, revealed that there appears to be considerable overlap across the subtests and the examinations as a whole, although there is no one-to-one correspondence between the subtests. There was therefore a sound basis upon which to proceed with the study.

The New 'Use of English' Examination

A fundamental change in testing philosophy underpinned the design of the new UE examination. Task authenticity became a primary consideration and is reflected in all four sections of the examination.

Section A–Listening

The Listening Paper sets out to test 'the ability of candidates to understand, organize and interpret spoken English as used by educated and fluent speakers of English as an international language' (HKEA, 1985: 2). The brief specifies that the spoken language used for the test is to be semi-formal rather than informal and that realistic contexts are to be provided. Furthermore, the candidates are to use the information obtained from listening to accomplish specific tasks and the test is to reflect real-life listening experiences. For example, candidates are allowed to listen once only to the information, but they are allowed to familiarize themselves with the task at hand before listening to the text so as to listen with a focus and purpose. An attempt is also made to cover a wide range of listening enabling skills, such as identifying main themes and supporting details, extracting global information and recognizing speakers' attitudes. The 1989 paper included the presentation of a monologue and dialogue conducted in a business context, while the 1990 paper used a monologue conducted in the form of a semi-academic lecture.

Section B–Writing

This test sets out to assess the candidates' ability to write extended discourse of an expository nature, e.g. in the form of persuasive arguments, short reports, development of hypotheses, etc. rather than straight narratives or descriptions. Candidates are given a choice of four writing topics from which they select one on which to write an essay of about 500 words. Care is taken to give each topic a realistic context and the writer a purpose for which to write. Assessment is based on organization of ideas and coherence of arguments as well as accuracy and range of the language used.

Section C--Reading and Language Systems

The reading part of this test, which carries about a quarter of the weighting of this section, is aimed at testing 'the ability of candidates to achieve an "in depth" understanding of an expository text' (HKEA, 1987: 3). The emphasis is not on fact-retrieval but on global comprehension of the overall structure of the text, which in turn depends on the candidates' ability to recognize the purpose of the text as well as the attitude of the writer. Items set on lexis require candidates to deduce contextual meanings through adequate interpretations of the text.

The language systems part, which carries three-quarters of the weighting of this section, sets out to test

> the extent to which the systems of the English language have been
> internalized by the candidates:
> - the lexicon
> - the morphology
> - the syntactic relationship within and among phrases and clauses, and
> - the structural relationships among sentences within paragraphs
> and in discourse (HKEA, 1987: 3)

This paper, which is to a large extent objectively marked, represents an attempt to tap the candidates' general language proficiency in English using test-tasks set at discourse level. The tasks, which include summary cloze, proof-reading, paragraph-building, list-matching, etc., call for a good mastery of English lexis and syntax as well as an awareness of cohesion and coherence features in English.

Section D--Practical Skills for Work and Study

As the title of this section suggests, the paper requires candidates to display such practical English language skills as are needed in work and study situations. A bank of information in verbal and graphic form is given to candidates as a data-file. Candidates are required to use the given data to complete several specified communicative tasks. In this way candidates' abilities in processing, selecting and presenting relevant information in a fitting manner as specified by the tasks are tested.

> The emphasis will be upon practical rather than academic skills as such, though the techniques and skills tested are those which are required for professional work which requires the ability to process information, make judgements and formulate solutions to problems; they will thus be equally relevant to students entering tertiary education. (HKEA, 1987: 4)

Language Analysis Sessions

Although HKU Language Centre's LAS battery of tests has been described elsewhere (Fok, 1985) a brief description of all the subtests is given below for ease of comparison with the UE subtests. It is also worth noting that the subtests have undergone some changes over the last five years.

1. Listening

The aim of this subtest is to test the candidates' ability to follow the overall development of academic discourse and to identify relationships between main points and examples. The test takes the form of an unscripted 35-minute lecture which has been recorded on video. The candidates take notes while viewing/listening to the lecture which they see once only. They then use their notes to answer short questions.

The test is divided into four parts, respectively testing candidates' ability to: identify the main points of the lecture; correct certain inaccurate statements about the content of the lecture; recognize points made during the lecture by selecting those points from a list; identify the relationship between certain examples and the main points of the lecture.

2. Writing

This test is designed to test the candidates' ability to write a tutorial paper. It is divided into five sections and a common theme runs through them all. The candidates are given a certain amount of input in the form of notes of the type they are likely to collect from reference material. Each of the subsections tests a different enabling skill. Candidates are expected to proofread and correct grammatical errors within the introduction of a text; describe changes that have taken place over time; compare different theoretical views using information provided in the form of notecards; use appropriate connectives; reformulate sections of a text that have been marked in the margin as problematic in writing style.

3. Reading

This test is designed to test the candidates' ability to adopt appropriate reading strategies for dealing with a long piece of academic-type discourse. It tests the candidates' ability to understand the main ideas within different sections of the text as well as their understanding of specific information presented in the text.

4. Oral

This is a direct test of the candidates' ability to participate actively in a tutorial discussion. It takes the form of a simulated tutorial with a tutor leading a 15-minute discussion among four or five candidates. Before the actual discussion candidates are given time to read a short passage on an academic subject and they are given some questions to consider on the basis of the reading. During the discussion, the candidates are encouraged to interact with one another rather than merely respond to the tutor's comments and questions. They are assessed by the tutor as well as two other markers on the basis of the following criteria: fluency, accuracy and interactional skills.

Procedure

The results for UE, LAS and end-of-first-year subject examinations were obtained for 346 first-year students admitted to the Faculty of Arts at HKU in September 1989. Details of these results are set out below.

1. UE Results

These consist of four weighted scores, one for each section of the UE paper, namely Listening, Writing, Reading & Language Systems, and Practical Skills for Work & Study. These weighted scores when added together make up the total UE score (henceforth UTOT), for which a UE grade is assigned to each candidate. The University of Hong Kong requires a minimum of grade D for admission to any of its programmes (In 1989, 46.3% of candidates sitting the UE exam achieved a grade D or above).

2. LAS Results

These are also weighted according to the four subtests, Reading and Listening carrying a weighting of 20%, and Writing and Oral a weighting of 30% each. They add up to an LAS total score (LTOT, henceforth).

3. B.A. First Year Examination Results

These are the results students received in their B.A. First Year Examinations in May 1990. In their first year students select 3 or 4 subjects from a choice of 17. Students' performance in these examinations determines their promotion to the second year of studies and their choice of major and minor subjects for their degree.

These results were statistically analysed to investigate:

a. Whether or not the new UE examination closely resembles the LAS tests in determining the subjects' overall language abilities on entry to university;

b. Whether or not the new UE examination taps the same language ability factors as the LAS tests;

c. Whether or not the new UE examination possesses a higher predictive ability than the LAS tests in terms of students' end-of-first-year results.

The following statistical analyses were carried out on the results:

a. UE total scores (UTOT) and LAS total scores (LTOT) were correlated to see whether the two tests yielded similar results. In addition, UE total scores (UTOT) were correlated against the LAS total minus the oral component (henceforth LTT), as oral skills are not tested in the UE examination (See table 1).

b. Factor analysis was carried out to see whether there were distinct UE and LAS language factors or whether specific factors overlapped across the two tests, that is the UE and LAS (See table 2).

c. UE and LAS results were correlated against the end-of first-year examination results to see which of the two tests performed as the better predictor of students' performance in their academic studies. In addition, correlations were run on the LAS total minus oral (LTT), since UE has no oral component (See table 3).

Findings and Discussion

1. Correlation between the UE Totals and the LAS Totals

The correlation index between the UE total score and the LAS total score was .6117** (see table 1 below). Though statistically significant at .001 level, the correlation leaves almost two-thirds (64%) of the variance unaccounted for, and hence the significance is likely to be a result of the large sample in the study (n=346). However, an important point to note is that the population used in this study is more homogeneous in terms of level of proficiency than the total population sitting the UE examination, since all the candidates in the study had a minimum grade D(10) in UE, that is, they were taken from the top 40% of the total UE population.

Since the UE examination has no oral component, UTOT was also correlated against the total scores of the LAS Listening, Reading and Writing subtests (LTT). This was found to be marginally higher at .6444** indicating that the oral subtest of the LAS did not significantly affect students' overall performance. It further suggests that the differences between the two tests cannot be accounted for by the lack of an oral subtest in the new UE examination.

Table 1: Correlation Indices for UE and LAS Total Scores

Correlations	UTOT	LTOT	LTT
UTOT	1.0000	.6117**	.6444**
LTOT	.6117**	1.0000	.8986**
LTT	.6444**	.8986**	1.0000

1-tailed signif: ** - .001

2. Factor Analysis

To obtain further evidence of whether the UE and LAS were tapping the same subskills, and whether higher correlations exist between subtests of similar skills than between the complete battery of tests, factor analysis was carried out. Factor 1 came out as a very strong factor accounting for 35.5% of the total variance, whereas Factor 2 was much less significant, accounting for only 4.7% of the total variance. The individual factor loadings for the eight subtests are shown in Figure 2 below.

When we look at the factor loadings for Factor 1, the strongest factor by far, we find no evidence of distinct UE and LAS factors. This is contrary to the findings in the 1985 study (Fok, op cit), and suggests that the present tests are not distinctly different in nature as was suggested of the old UE and the LAS in the 1985 study. There is also no clear evidence to suggest that similarity of language skills yielded significant overlap in the variance of the 8 subtests. Therefore one might conclude that Factor 1 is an 'integrated language skills' factor, probably with slightly greater dependence on the reading and listening skills since the highest factor loadings are for LR, UR, LL and UL.

The highest factor loadings for Factor 2 are for LW (.62) and UW (.60) suggesting a writing factor over and above the integrated skills factor. However, since this factor only accounts for 4.7% of the total variance, the role played by writing per se in the two test batteries should not be overestimated.

Table 2: Factor analysis of subtests of UE and LAS

	Factor 1	Factor 2
UL	.53	.24
UW	.10	.60
UR	.60	.49
UWASPS	.37	.10
LR	.73	.19
LW	.45	.62
LL	.57	.22
LO	.34	.34

Key:

UL	UE Listening	LR	LAS Reading
UW	UE Writing	LW	LAS Writing
UR	UE Reading & Language Systems	LL	LAS Listening
UWASPS	UE Work & Study Practical Skills	LO	LAS Oral

3. Predictive Abilities of the UE Exam and the LAS Tests

From the correlation indices given in Figure 3 below, it can be seen that the LTT scores have the strongest predictive power, followed by the LTOT scores. If we take the B.A. First Year Examination as the criterion behaviour then it would appear that the LAS test results have more in common with the target performance than do the results of the UE examination. However, this difference in predictive power is much less marked than that found between the LAS and the old UE examination in the 1985 study (Fok, op cit). In addition, one must recognize the fact that there are many factors which contribute to the B.A. Examination results and that it would be impossible to identify them all so as to isolate the proportion of variance attributable to English abilities alone.

If one looks closely at the ranking of individual correlation indices in each column, it can be seen that the LAS results conform more closely to our expectation as to which subjects require a higher level of proficiency in English. The LTT scores boast a highly significant .61** correlation with Comparative Literature, and a significant .47** correlation with English Language and Literature. The fact that significant correlations were obtained for such subjects as Political Science, Psychology, Geography and Geology, and History also offers no surprise as these are subjects which require students to write reasonably long English prose of a discursive nature. The fact that the LTT results produced a significant negative correlation of .27* against Chinese Language and Literature also seems consistent with the common-sense assumption that one does not need proficiency in English to do well in Chinese.

The LTOT results yielded a similar rank order of subject correlations to LTT, again with Comparative Literature and English Language and Literature correlating most highly and Chinese Language and Literature correlating negatively.

The UTOT results, by comparison, yielded less convincing figures with what may appear a puzzlingly high correlation of .59* (significant at the .01 level) for Statistics, the highest of all the subjects. This high correlation may, however, have been a result of the small number of subjects who took Statistics in the Faculty of Arts (n=20). The fact that English Language and Literature and Comparative Literature still come rather high on the list while Chinese Language and Literature and Computer Science are found at the bottom with negative correlation indices restores substantial credibility to the predictive power of the new UE examination.

Table 3: Correlations Indices between UE Exam Results, LAS Test Results and First Year Exam Results

UTOT		LTOT		LTT	
ST	.59*	CL	.65**	CL	.61**
EN	.42**	EN	.49**	MU	.60
FA	.39	MU	.41	EN	.47**
GG	.38**	JA	.36*	ST	.41
CL	.34	PS	.35**	PS	.38**
MU	.28	ST	.28	JA	.34
JA	.24	SY	.28*	FA	.30
HI	.22	FA	.27	PY	.29**
PS	.20	GG	.24*	GG	.28*
PH	.19	CS	.23	HI	.26*
SY	.18	PY	.22*	SY	.15
GM	.16	HI	.21	PH	.13
PY	.18	PH	.18	EC	.07
EC	.02	EC	.09	CS	.06
CS	-.21	GM	-.14	GM	-.16
CH	-.22	CH	-.25*	CH	-.27*

1-tailed signif: * - .01 ** - .001

Key:	ST -	Statistics	n = 20
	EN -	English Language & Literature	n = 148
	FA -	Fine Art	n = 15
	GG -	Geography & Geology	n = 106
	CL -	Comparative Literature	n = 41
	MU -	Music	n = 13
	JA -	Japanese	n = 45
	HI -	History	n = 86
	PS -	Political Science	n = 120
	PH -	Philosophy	n = 89
	SY -	Sociology	n = 89
	GM -	German	n = 14
	PY -	Psychology	n = 178
	EC -	Economic	n = 145
	CS -	Computer Science	n = 16
	CH -	Chinese Language & Literature	n = 110

TotalY N=346 (students take 3 or 4 subjects in their first year at university)

Conclusion

The above analyses seem to suggest that for the purpose of predicting prospective undergraduates' academic performance the LAS tests continue to function more effectively than the UE examination. This is not surprising if one bears in mind the fact that the LAS tests are targeting a much more homogeneous population, la crême de la crême both in terms of English proficiency and overall academic achievement (Although the LAS tests are a better predictor of undergraduates' first-year performance in their academic subjects, in some instances it would appear that the LAS tests would serve this purpose better if the oral subtest were removed from the test battery).

Despite there being considerable overlap in skills tested, and there being a possible common 'integrated skills' factor, the UE examination and LAS tests are not identical and could in no way be regarded as parallel. In order to maximise the information upon which decisions can be made about students' needs for English enhancement, it would seem necessary to continue with some form of internal pre-course testing. However, before any decisions can be made as to whether to retain an internal measure, one must consider the purpose of testing to see how far there is a real and justifiable need for the additional information provided by the LAS (or any equivalent) tests.

Our study suggests that the new UE examination appears to be more valid than the old UE both in terms of face and predictive validity. It may be a sufficient measure in cases where English enhancement is not equated with remediation, but is considered an integral part of English-medium tertiary education to be offered to all incoming students.

REFERENCES

Fok, Angela C. Y. Y. 1985. 'Language Proficiency and Related Factors'. In Lee, Y. P., Fok, Angela C. Y. Y., Lord, Robert & Low, Graham (eds.) *New Directions in Language Testing*, pp. 127-135. Oxford, Pergamon Press.

Hong Kong Examinations Authority 1987. *New Use of English Examination,* Hong Kong.

HONGKONG PAPERS IN LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE TEACHING 14 (1991) ISSN 1015-2059

TESTING LISTENING COMPREHENSION: A NEW APPROACH?

Jo Lewkowicz
University of Hong Kong

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to discuss some of the issues involved in validating a listening comprehension test that was developed as part of a language proficiency measure for tertiary level students in China. The paper considers the need for validation, as well as some of the difficulties in validating a new subtest. It goes on to look at the rationale of the test in the Chinese context, and the theoretical basis upon which it was developed. It then describes the approach adopted, the results of piloting the test, and finally their implication for future test development.

Test Validation

Once a genuine need for a new test has been established, the test specifications have to be drawn up. These are frequently based on existing syllabi and/or needs analyses. However, as Alderson (1988) points out, both are subject to judgements being made by so-called experts, so the content of any test is dependent on the decisions made about what the learners need to know or be able to do with the language. Furthermore, test specifications have to be operationalized in a way that trivial items are avoided and items used are valid, that is, they test what they set out to test. Hence any test can only be as good as the operational realisation of its rationale, which, in reality, grows and is modified throughout the operationalization and cannot be fully developed in advance. In other words, the items of a test can only be validated against a given test rationale.

The difficulty of constructing valid items may lead to a further problem, that referred to by Davies (cited in Morrow, 1981: 19) as the reliability-validity 'tension'. To increase reliability a tester may inadvertently take a limiting view of validity which results in a reliable test of somewhat dubious, though statistically acceptable, validity.

Background

The language tester's dilemma has nowhere been greater than in China where the number of testees and the difficulty of arranging the moderation of marking inevitably lead test writers to develop objective type tests and examinations. Such tests, despite all their recognised drawbacks, are favoured because they not only encourage testers to develop a large number of test items which allow for a spread of results, but also enable comparability of results across the country. It is therefore not surprising that major tests rely heavily on multiple-choice type questions. This can clearly be seen in the two tests, that is the Matriculation English Tests (MET) and the Graded Tests for English Majors (GEM), that are being developed at the Guangzhou Institute of Foreign Languages (GIFL)--one of the major test centres in China--for widespread use throughout the country. Both tests are designed as measures of English language achievement/proficiency, the former at university entrance level, the latter at various stages throughout the degree programme.

The external constraints that were imposed on MET allowed the test developers little room for experimentation with alternative forms of testing. However, this has not been the case for GEM. The test developers were given guidelines as to the skills to be tested and suggestions were drawn up as to test format, but considerable leeway was given during initial development (1988-89) when the first two GEM examinations (GEM 4, to be administered at the end of the second year of university study, and GEM 8, to be administered at the end of the final year) were written.

The GEM examinations which are made up of four papers attempt to balance the multiple choice format with other test formats, including open-ended writing tasks. In developing the examinations a conscious effort was made to ensure a positive washback effect of the tests on classroom teaching, yet at the same time the test designers were aware of the difficulties of marking the more open-ended questions especially once the tests had been piloted and were in large scale use. It was with such considerations in mind that the new listening summary cloze test, to be discussed in this paper, was developed.

The Testing of Listening Comprehension

The testing of listening comprehension has undergone considerable changes in recent years as a result of a greater understanding of the processes involved in listening (see e.g. Brown, 1990, Buck, 1988, Rost, 1990). There has been a movement away from the belief that listening comprehension is a one-way bottom-up process towards the theory that it requires a more complex combination of top-down and bottom-up processing. In other words, listening is not just the consecutive processing of subskills starting from the lowest level to the highest. It requires processing at a number of different levels to which no fixed order can be attributed. The listener utilizes not only his knowledge of the language being spoken, that is, his knowledge of the morphemes, phonemes. lexis and syntax of the language, but also his knowledge of the outside world and how it relates to the topic at hand, as well as his interpretation of what has been said so far, in order to comprehend the message. The listener hypothesizes about what the speaker will say next and uses his knowledge of the culture to help him understand linguistic complexities. He will therefore rely heavily on context and it is with regard to context that tests of listening comprehension have changed dramatically. There is now a recognition of the fact that "if we ask students to decode short decontextualized sentences, we are not testing listening comprehension at all but asking students to engage in a very unnatural activity which seems to be confined largely to the second language classroom", (Buck, 1988: 22). As a result, it is becoming less and less common to see decontextualized utterances being used in tests of listening comprehension.

What appears not to have changed is the belief that testers should strive towards designing tests that are 'pure'. Tests that require students to respond in speech or writing are considered 'contaminated' because they are testing more than the skills of listening. Buck (1988: 33), for example, cautions against mistaking intervening variables and suggests ways to overcome the 'problems' of contamination. Yet if we look at the skill of listening as it is used in real-life, it will soon become clear that we rarely listen solely for pleasure or enjoyment. More often than not the listener is required to 'do' something with what he has heard: to respond to it in speech, take notes on it, or reproduce it in written form. Researchers are beginning to assert the fact that students should not only be tested on their level of comprehension, but also on their ability to use the information they have heard, even though they recognise that such more integrative tests may affect the reliability of the measure.

> Although judgements on the value of listening-skill tests primarily on the basis of statistical reliability are desirable on scientific grounds, such judgements are questionable in terms of educational principles....The unfortunate effect [of such tests] on the pedagogy (which is not necessarily intended by the writers) is that the test users--language teachers and learners--may come to accept that listening ability amounts to whatever can be measured reliably... (Rost, 1990: 180).

Testers, therefore, should be willing to sacrifice test purity in order to maximize task authenticity and provide a positive washback effect on teaching.

Listening Summary Cloze

One of the skills required of tertiary level students is the ability to understand and retain information imparted during lectures. The most commonly used means to achieve this end is through notetaking. Yet good notetaking in a second or foreign language is not an easy task. It may, in certain situations, be an important skill to teach and hence to test. Students studying English in China, for example, may be required to attend lectures on literature and culture given by native speakers of English or may want to go on to study abroad. They would benefit from notetaking being included as part of their syllabus. A similar argument would hold true for students studying in an L2 at tertiary level, as in Hong Kong. If the teaching is to be effective, then the skill needs to be tested. However, the testing of notetaking is not easy. Notetaking is a very individual skill which cannot be realistically assessed on its own. It can, however, be tested indirectly by asking students to take notes on a lecture but judging them on the accomplishment of a task based on their notes.

A number of such tasks are in widespread use, varying from the more closed, objective tasks of completing an outline of a talk/lecture, to the more open, subjective tasks such as writing a summary of a lecture. The problem with the former is that it is not only unrealistic, but allows for only a limited number of test items. The problem with the latter, on the other hand, is the difficulty of the task as well as the marking. A desirable test would therefore be one that minimized these disadvantages, but at the same time had a positive washback effect on teaching.

To meet these criteria the listening summary cloze test (LSC) was introduced as part of the GEM examinations. This test is made up of two tasks:

1. listening to a talk/lecturette and taking notes on it;
2. completing a summary cloze passage based on the notes taken during the listening and notetaking phase.

The first phase of the test, which is not assessed, is designed to facilitate completion of the second phase, and at the same time to encourage students to take notes while listening. The students use these notes to complete the second phase of the test, a summary cloze passage for which a rational deletion procedure is used. Deletions are placed on high information content to avoid students being able to complete the summary without having heard the talk/lecturette. One mark is awarded for each correct word or phrase used to complete the blanks.

The LSC test described above is similar to the listening cloze (LC) test described in Buck (1988: 28-29) in that in both tests the cloze passage is based on a summary of the original text. However, in the LC test the students are given the summary prior to listening to the talk/lecturette and they can complete it while listening or at the end from memory, whereas in the LSC the summary is withheld until the testees have heard the text and completed their notes. Therefore, they have to understand the talk/lecturette to be able to take notes on it, and then they have to rely on these notes to complete the summary.

Development of the Test

Two 20-item listening summary cloze test were developed in 1989, one as part of GEM 4 and the other as part of GEM 8. The former was piloted with a total of 203 students--173 end of first year English majors and 107 end of second year English majors at GIFL. The latter was also piloted at GIFL, on 117 end-of-third-year English majors. There was some delay in piloting the tests and as a result fourth year students were not targeted during the first trial of the test.

The lecturettes used in GEM 4 and GEM 8 were on different topics. An additional difference was the order in which the information was given in the summary. In GEM 4, the summary followed the order of the original text, while in GEM 8 the order of the summary was different to that of the original text, presumably making it more difficult for the students to retrieve the relevant information from their notes.

Results of Piloting

After scoring the tests, the results were analyzed using SPSS. The results of the listening summary cloze were correlated with the results on the other subtests, including the rest of the listening subtest, as well as the total scores on the test battery. In addition, facility values and discrimination indices were calculated for each item. A summary of results is given in tables 1-4 below.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Listening Summary Cloze

	Items	Mean (%)	Std Dev
GEM 4 (Yr 1)	20	8.3584 (42.8)	2.7637
GEM 4 (Yr 2)	20	11.4112 (57.1)	2.8449
GEM 8 (Yr 3)	20	9.7094 (48.5)	3.6861

Table 2: Correlation of Listening Summary Cloze (LSC) with a 30-item Listening Subtest and Total Test Scores

	Listening	Total Test Scores
LSC (Yr 1)	.3865**	.7478**
LSC (Yr 2)	.4644**	.6783**
LSC (Yr 3)	.5679**	.6650**

1-tailed significance ** .001

Table 3: Summary of Item Analysis for Listening Summary Cloze (GEM 4)

	Year 1		Year 2	
Difficulty	Total	No (<.3)	Total	No (<.3)
Very Difficult	1	0	2	1
Difficult	6	0	3	0
Intermediate	6	1	6	0
Easy	4	0	5	0
Very Easy	1	0	4	3

Table 4: Summary of Item Analysis for Listening Summary Cloze (GEM 8)

Difficulty	Total	No (<.3)
Very Difficult	1	0
Difficult	5	0
Intermediate	10	0
Easy	4	1
Very Easy	0	0

The mean scores indicate that the tests were of moderate difficulty. Not surprisingly, the second year students performed better on the test than the first years. A comparison of means across subtests is impossible since, as mentioned above, the two were quite different.

The correlations with the rest of the listening test suggest that though there is significant overlap between the two, the listening summary cloze tests skills other than listening. In terms of test purity these tests can indeed be seen as contaminated, which was to be expected because of the dual nature of the tests. However, for both the second and third year results the correlations of the listening summary cloze with the listening subtest were higher than for the other subtests suggesting that the listening summary cloze was functioning to a large extent as a listening test and not one of reading and filling in the blanks. The exception was with the first year results where the correlation between reading and the listening summary cloze was considerably higher than that for listening and listening summary cloze, the correlations being .6262** and .3865** respectively. This may have been because the first years are less proficient in the skills being tested since it is only once they start their degree programme that listening skills are intensively taught and hence they may still have to rely on reading skills to complete the test. This result was not unduly disturbing as the test was designed to be administered at the end of the second year and was somewhat difficult for the first year students.

The item analysis is perhaps most interesting. Both listening summary cloze tests appear to have needed only limited moderation. For GEM 4 a maximum of 5 items needed to be looked at and possibly changed or omitted, whereas for GEM 8 only two items were unacceptable. Such a modest amount of moderation, notwithstanding Fletcher's claim that "in future the test needed to be constructed with more care" (1990: 66), was to be expected.

On the basis of these results it was decided to retain the summary listening cloze as part of both the GEM 4 and GEM 8 battery of tests. The same test format has in the last two years (1989-91) been experimented with at the Language Centre of the University of Hong Kong with equally encouraging results.

Discussion

The listening summary cloze described in this paper appears to have a number of advantages. The talk/lecturette format allows the setter considerable flexibility in the choice of topic and the degree to which the topic is developed. The test may be made easier or more difficult by the length of the lecturette, the topic chosen or the method used by the speaker(s) to develop the topic. The lecturette can be purpose written and recorded as was the case at GIFL, or prerecorded from, for example, the radio, as is the practice at the University of Hong Kong. The latter is more authentic but depends on a bank of material being built up for possible future use for testing.

Another distinct advantage of this test format is that it lends itself to a large number of items being written. This not only eases the pressure at moderation since some of the items can always be eliminated if they do not work, but it also ensures a spread of marks. The validity of the test depends on the validity of the texts chosen and the items deleted. In order to ensure that both lower and higher-order listening skills are tested, the rational deletion procedure is used. This allows the test setter to make judgements as to the most suitable items for testing and enables a balance of listening enabling skills to be sampled. However, it must be remembered that the testing of lower-order skills is easier and unless due care is taken to construct a balanced test, test validity will be sacrificed.

The marking of the test items is largely objective, yet the testees are not restricted to the exact words or phrases used on the tape. This allows them to demonstrate their comprehension of the text and adds to the authenticity of the task. Furthermore, to complete the task the students need their notes; they therefore have a purpose for taking notes and they need not rely on memory for task completion. To test that the students can really use their notes, the setter can vary the order of information given in the summary. It is likely that following the exact order of the lecturette makes the task easier, but often in real life one has to be not only selective in the information to be used, but also aware that the order in which information is given is not sacrosanct.

Like all objective type tests, the listening summary cloze is not easy to set. Setters have to be careful in choosing the listening text to ensure it lends itself to a good summary and that there is sufficient redundancy of information to allow for notetaking. They must also pay particular attention to the deletions to ensure that these cannot be filled in on the basis of general knowledge, on the one hand, and that they are not testing trivial information likely to be missed by the listener, on the other. Thus pretesting on colleagues who have not heard the tape is advisable, and the moderation of the marking scheme is vital.

Careful administration of the test is also crucial. Clear instructions to the testees are essential, as they are for any test, and guidance as to the nature of the information to be noted may also be necessary. There are numerous ways testees can be prevented from filling in the summary cloze while listening. The summary can be withheld until after the tape has been played or the test booklet can be prepared in such a way that the students are prevented from looking at the summary while listening. Whatever method is used, it is essential that the students do not fill in the gaps while listening as they are likely to miss essential information.

Conclusion

The validation of this test method is still in its early stages and more research needs to be undertaken. However, the results to date are encouraging and indicate the suitability of the test for use at tertiary level. When the GEM examinations go nationwide in 1991-92 it is hoped that this test will have a positive washback effect on teaching and will encourage staff in China to move away from the more traditional approaches of teaching listening to more integrative ones which allow a greater variety of activity in the language classroom. It should also help students see the merit of good notetaking.

The test itself, though an indirect measure of notetaking and listening, does appear to have face validity. It would be interesting to see if students could fulfil the task of completing the summary cloze after a delayed period, such as a week, as this would verify that the students really are capable of using the notes they have taken during a lecture.

A considerable effort has to be made when writing the tests to ensure that there are no ambiguities in the summary and that the test is tapping relevant notetaking/listening skills. It would therefore seem advisable, even in a country as large as China where the problems of test security are well known, to build up a bank of tests and not to rely on having a new test for each successive administration. This would not only be a more cost effective approach, but also a more theoretically sound one.

Finally a word of caution. There is no ideal test and the listening summary cloze is no exception. Although it is a test that appears to satisfy many prerequisites of a good test and therefore may well be suitable for advanced learners needing notetaking and listening skills, it should be considered in conjunction with other test formats and not as a substitute for all other listening tests.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank Wang Chuming who was Acting Head of the Testing Project at GIFL when this test was developed. It was thanks to him that this test was piloted and that I received the results discussed in this paper. I would also like to thank the rest of the 1988-90 testing team at GIFL for their help in developing and moderating the test. Finally, I would like to thank Peter Falvey and Desmond Allison for their invaluable comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

REFERENCES

Alderson, J. Charles 1988. 'New Procedures for validating proficiency tests in ESP? Theory and Practice'. *Language Testing* 5/2: 220-232.

Brown, Gillian 1990. *Listening to Spoken English.* Longman: London and New York.

Buck, Gary 1988. 'Testing Listening Comprehension in Japanese University Entrance Examinations'. *Japanese Association of Language Teachers Journal* 10/1 & 2: 15-42.

Fletcher, Nicholas 1990. 'Test Validation at G.I.F.L.--Towards a More Scientific Approach'. In Chen Lie Qiang, Chen Xin Seng & Zhang Mei Qin (eds.) *The Proceedings: Second Guangdong Symposium on English Teaching of Foreign Experts/Teachers.* May 25 1990: 59-70.

Morrow, Keith 1981. 'Communicative Language Testing: Revolution or Evolution?' In Alderson, J. C. and Hughes, A. (eds.) *Issues in Language Testing, ELT Documents 111* pp. 9-26. The British Council.

Rost, Michael 1990. *Listening in Language Learning.* Longman: London and New York.

HONGKONG PAPERS IN LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE TEACHING 14 (1991) ISSN 1015-2059

MISREADING VIEWPOINTS: READING PROBLEMS AMONG ESL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN HONG KONG

Desmond Allison and Ip Kung Sau
University of Hong Kong

Introduction

Despite a substantial body of research into reading problems among users of English as a second language, claims by teachers of English that such problems persist among ESL university students tend, in our experience, to be received with some scepticism. Learners themselves do not often rate reading as one of their major areas of difficulty, or as a desirable priority for courses in English for academic purposes (EAP). Subject teachers, course administrators and even some EAP teachers may reinforce beliefs that academic reading is not too much of a problem, at least not by comparison with listening, speaking or writing. Such thinking can influence the design of English teaching programmes and affect their potential outcomes.

Experienced readers will have inferred that we believe the reading problems of ESL university students, in our own teaching situation, to be in some danger of neglect, and to be in need of attention. Interestingly, less experienced readers of academic writing might not have drawn any such inference from our opening text. As we aim to show, the ability of readers to interpret viewpoints being developed within texts is often far from assured, even among quite advanced learners. We propose to describe reading problems that we have identified among students at the University of Hong Kong (HKU), to seek to account for these problems, and to suggest how teachers may make learners more aware of difficulties and misunderstandings that can easily arise in interpreting academic writing.

We do not underrate the difficulties that teachers and researchers face in identifying what a reader's interpretation of a text may be, or in deciding when such interpretations can justifiably be said to constitute a misreading and not simply an alternative reading of a text (see editorial comments in Alderson and Urquhart, 1984). Readers are invited to consider these issues within the contexts of the examples to be presented in this paper.

We accept that effective reading is interactive, in the sense of Carrell (1988): successful interpretation of meaning in texts will involve the interaction of top-down and bottom-up processes, so that a reader's interpretation is not driven solely by either an initially chosen schema or the parsing of successive word groupings. We would simply add that a good deal of less effective reading is also interactive in nature, as we shall exemplify.

In seeking to identify and describe students' problems in reading academic discourse, we shall draw upon action research involving individual learners as well as work in the experimental tradition that compares responses over groups of learners. Such a range of approaches seems to us to be appropriate to the purpose.[1]

Our examples in Part One are drawn from teacher comparison of a source text with a student's written response, supplemented by discussion with the student of how certain features of the source text are to be understood. Such intervention by the teacher is characteristic of action research (and teaching), but it inevitably raises the issue of how far a student's introspections, as elicited and reported during discussions, may reveal actual problems and processes in reading. We would not expect all difficulties to be identified in such ways, but we are confident that the kind of interviews we shall describe can bring to light, and help to rectify, some persistent learner misunderstandings of words, phrases, grammatical choices or discourse moves in texts.

In Part Two, we report on a study in which a short comprehension test was used to elicit reader responses in an area where comprehension difficulties were anticipated, and to compare tendencies over groups of readers under contrasting conditions. A study of this kind raises its own questions of application to actual reading. There is always a danger that outcomes may be an experimental artefact rather than a genuine elicitation of ways in which readers (mis)interpret meanings in texts. Provided, though, that care is taken in interpreting findings, work in the experimental tradition will continue to offer useful insights into responses that are widespread in a given population of readers, and into factors that can influence such responses.

Part One: Individual Case-Studies

We may expect some reading problems to be widespread in a class, so that addressing these problems in teaching can help learners who have difficulties in common. Yet it is ultimately individuals, rather than groups, who have reading problems. One needs a better understanding of what individual difficulties actually are than a simple indication of who gives a wrong answer on some comprehension test item.

Individual learning experiences and difficulties can be explored through studies of introspective and retrospective data (see Faerch and Kasper, 1987). Interviews that elicit readers' own explanations of what they have understood from a text can greatly assist our understanding of how learners interpret what they read. A record of such interviews, in the form of transcribed audio recordings or of notes written in a teacher-researcher's diary, reveals important information about what a learner has understood from a text, the reasons the learner gives for this interpretation, and ways in which interpretations of particular linguistic patterns may contribute to or may be influenced by an overall (mis)understanding of the text. This is not to claim that researchers' accounts of such data are infallibly accurate, but simply that they are based on a fuller and more intensive individual study than is the case for most teacher and researcher judgements.

In relatively privileged teaching situations, it becomes possible to pursue such action research when working with individual learners. The following accounts are drawn from work with students who were taught individually for some time by one of the authors, K.S. Ip, at the Language Centre at HKU. The Centre offers a limited service to individual students who seek to improve their English language skills. A student is assigned by the Centre to meet a tutor on a one to one basis, and problems are discussed before a 'diagnosis' and advice for further action can be given. Students may occasionally return a number of times, depending on the nature of the problem, the motivation of the learner and the availability of a tutor. The more sustained study reported here involved many additional voluntary hours on the part of the staff member.

This service to undergraduate students was originally termed the 'Writing Clinic', which indicates that problems have most commonly been perceived by teachers and students alike as pertaining to writing rather than to other skills such as reading. Although students can now seek advice under any of the four skills, few if any 'complaints', to continue with the medical metaphor, are identified as 'reading problems' by students. One reason may be that students usually only become alerted to their own problems with (written) English when they receive negative feedback on tutorial essays.

One difficulty in presenting our findings is that extended contexts are often needed for the nature of a problem to be fully appreciated, yet a range of illustrations is also desirable. To reconcile these demands without making the paper unduly lengthy, we shall report two examples from one case study in some detail and others in summary form.

The subject of the more detailed case study is a third year arts student reading five papers in English literature and linguistics, and three papers in Chinese studies. This particular student is chosen for our discussion because of her readiness to engage in introspection. Her high proficiency in the first language seems to have given her an awareness of how language works. But perhaps of more interest to the discussion here is that she is a highly motivated learner, who makes sure she understands the vocabulary, but is not word-bound and uses an interactive strategy to work out the meaning of a text. Yet, as shown in the discussion below, she has not been successful.

This student undertook to read the "letters to the editor" column of the South China Morning Post, with a view to writing a response to a letter of her choice, in a similar expository style. This exercise was negotiated between the tutor and the student: it was felt that the student would show more interest in a topic if it is of her own choosing, that she would be exposed to a variety of views by different correspondents, and that the exercise would familiarize her with the forms of argumentation and refutation.

The first two examples, discussed in depth, will illustrate how an integrative strategy can still result in misreading.

Example 1

A letter (SCMP 23/7/90; full text in Appendix A) headed "Discuss this matter openly" on the subject of homosexuality includes the following four sentences in the course of an 11-sentence text, starting with:

a. "While listening to the debate leading up to the recent decision to abolish the law on homosexuality, I got the impression that most people see being homosexually orientated as an abnormal, hopeless condition which only deserves polite words of consolation."

The third sentence in the text reads:

b. "It is ludicrous to think that a homosexual ever chose to be attracted to his own sex."

The concluding paragraphs include:

c. "...and therefore we need an openness to discussing homosexuality which is brave and patient yet does not compromise moral standards. ..."

and end with:

d. "To homosexuals still struggling with their feelings, let's continue to work towards better things."

The student's interpretation of these four points was respectively:

a. The author sat through the debate, and learnt that being homosexually orientated is an abnormal, hopeless condition.
b. It is ludicrous for a homosexual to think that he ever chose to be attracted to his own sex.
c. Homosexuals are brave, however, to discuss things in the open.
d. They are still struggling...

It is interesting to note the internal consistency of the misinterpretation. A schema was tentatively set in (a) as information of common knowledge, that homosexuals are abnormal. This was confirmed in (b), that homosexuals are 'ludicrous', a word which the student checked in the dictionary. When the student came to (c), she admitted initially suspecting a possible discrepancy (though for the wrong reason): why does the author criticize homosexuals and then compliment them on their bravery? Her interactive strategy might have required her to rework what the author's view was at this point. However, the concluding sentence (d) that they are still struggling confirmed her understanding that they are brave. Hence, her integrated comprehension was that the author, despite his disapproval of homosexuals, acknowledges their brave struggle, and asks the public to help them.

University students usually have to handle texts longer than this, which leads to the next question: how far into the text will this kind of conscientious but unsuccessful interactive reading carry the student before she is too perplexed? Our second example will illustrate the possible extent of such misreading.

Example 2

A letter entitled "Smoking ban on planes unnecessary" appeared in the South China Morning Post (SCMP 31/8/90). This letter is twice as long as our previous example, and carries relatively longer sentences. The opening section of the letter is as follows:

> "In recent weeks there have been several letters about smoking on aircraft, and this month an article has appeared in part suggesting that non-smokers may be at real risk from exposure to passengers who happen to be enjoying a cigarette.
>
> With the World Health Organisation and the British Medical Association calling for a total ban on airline smoking, it is high time that a few basic facts were aired on a subject which has become contentious for no good reason.
>
> Whatever anti-smoking activists may say, there simply is no reputable scientific consensus which can support so-called "passive smoking" as a serious health hazard."

It is clear to the experienced reader that the author is critical of previous arguments and challenges supporters to provide scientific evidence.

The student felt, however, that the author's position was that "non-smokers may be at real risk". Based on this she appeared to have established an initial schema, which she first had to test against "it is high time that a few basic facts were aired on **a subject which has become contentious for no good reason**". She looked up "contentious" and decided the meaning fitted in with the initial schema that 'smokers being at risk is a fact that warrants no controversy'. This (mis)interpretation was further fortified by the next few paragraphs, which were read by the student in the same light.

The experienced reader's understanding of the full text (in Appendix B) would be that the author refutes a previous correspondent's objections to smoking, and puts forward the argument that smokers have rights too, especially in view of:

a. the declared absence of statistically significant scientific proof of the risks of passive smoking;
b. the ease of improving air flow in aircraft.

The student, however, read "Other people's tobacco smoke may well be a nuisance or an irritation for some, in certain circumstances, but... " (the author goes on to explain the logistics) to mean 'smoke is indeed a nuisance', which was taken to be additional information, consistent with her understanding of the author's meaning. This understanding was further expanded to incorporate a concessive opening "It is true that such measures would cost the airlines money, but..." to mean 'smokers are troublesome people and to accommodate them would incur additional costs'. Taken together with the logistics in improving the air-flow, which she, as a conscientious reader, does acknowledge, her interpretation prompted her to write:

> "The (previous) correspondent himself admitted that other people's tobacco smoking is a nuisance. This should not be doubted. How can he expect that the air conditioning system in such enclosed space to be efficient in eliminating smoke? All the arguments about improving the system and costs involved can be eliminated if people don't smoke."

By this point, the student was well into the text.

From the above retrospective analysis of the written summary and introspective analysis of the persisting interpretation, it is clear that conscientious interactive reading does not always ensure comprehension of an author's position. The next question would be: what type of authorial stance is most prone to misinterpretation?

On the basis of instances such as those reported here, it appears to us that students have persistent problems with missing the non-supportive stance that an author may adopt towards views that he or she is presenting. These instances include cases where an author is critical of another view, referring to it only in order to dismiss it; or where the author concedes the possible validity of a view, but seeks to draw the reader's attention to other aspects which are presented as more important. Whatever the variation, it seems that our students are not sensitized to the intended emphasis or weight put on each piece of information. Our next examples (3a, 3b, 3c) illustrate such tendencies.

Example 3a

This example is taken from another letter headed "Tam case shows checks and balances needed for HK" (SCMP 7/8/90):

> "Of course, no one is quite sure what is going to happen after 1997, but because the present regime in China has such a poor record in dealing with its own people, and it is well known that China's leaders are much displeased with the people of Hong Kong, it has been assumed - and wisely so - that precautions need to be taken."

The text was chosen by another student attending the Writing Clinic: a second-year female undergraduate from the Faculty of Arts, reading three papers in English. When asked to identify the main point in the written sentence, she felt that every piece of information was of equal importance, and they were not necessarily connected:

1. No one is sure what happens after 1997.
2. China has had a poor record.
3. China does not like HK people.
4. Precautions must be taken.

It is worth noting here that the student seemed to have been thrown off by the opening:

"**Of course**, no one is quite sure..., but..."

In our tutorial session, the student's attention was drawn to the two parts of the compound sentence connected by the word "but". An experienced reader would see the author as wanting to place emphasis on the second part, which would be the author's own position, and as playing down the first part which serves the function of acknowledging a differing view. The student, however, appears to have seen the two parts of the sentence as bearing more or less equal information load, with the connection behaving more like an "and", as in "I like oranges but I like apples too".

Comparable difficulties have already been noted in the case study of the third-year student, with

> "**It is true** that such measures would cost the airlines money, but ...";
> "While..., I got the impression that **most people** see homosexuality as..."

One may speculate on whether such indicators may loom more prominently and 'authoritatively' for readers of certain cultural backgrounds. In all three instances, students had missed the critical attitude that follows immediately.

In another example, it proved difficult for the third-year student to detect a negative, in this case ironic, authorial view in the sentence:

Example 3b

> "The Bill of Rights was finally passed at the Legislative Council on June 27. **The strong opposition based on political considerations has only served to strengthen public support for the Bill.**" (SCMP 3/8/90: "Best guarantee for a smooth transition")

The student's interpretation was, 'The strong opposition has managed to serve just one function, that of strengthening public support'; the student missed the author's ironic indication that the actual effect of the strong opposition was opposite to what was intended.

The earlier letters on homosexuality and on smoking both begin by referring to an existing view that their authors would then go on to reject. Another example of such a move appears in a letter on the condition of Filipino maids in Hong Kong. The first sentence of that letter reads:

Example 3c

> "The Commissioner of Labour's reply concerning foreign domestic workers spells frustration to those who had hoped for a genuine solution." (SCMP 3/10/90)

The stance of the letter writer towards the Commissioner of Labour's reply is clearly critical: the Commissioner's reply, it is said, only offers frustration to anyone hoping for a real solution. We can anticipate that the author is likely to continue by outlining what a genuine solution would comprise, and/or how the Commissioner of Labour's reply fails to offer this. The second-year student's understanding, however, was 'The Commissioner of Labour said that foreign domestic workers have a lot of frustration'.

This particular example might indeed be one of 'careless' reading (in which the significance of "spells frustration to", as distinct for instance from "spells out the frustration of", was simply not attended to), yet it is striking that such misreadings should also persist in obviously 'careful' readers, who take time and trouble to look up the meanings of words and to articulate the grounds for their own interpretation of a text.

It seems that our students tend to miss the critical comment in the author's point of view, mistaking it to be a supportive statement. Having formed a tentative but faulty top-down schema, 'careful' but ineffective readers continued to incorporate new information from the text into the schema, and to interpret text by reference to it. Researchers have begun to investigate the nature and possible origins of such dominant content as well as rhetorical schemata: see, e.g., Steffenson (1986). Further studies into cross-cultural discourse with subjects who are articulate and proficient in at least one language may well yield interesting results.

Part Two: A Quasi-Experimental Study

Persistent misreading of an author's preparatory moves towards establishing a critical view will undoubtedly be serious when students set out to interpret academic discourse. Although our earlier examples from readers' letters serve to show that moves of this nature are not peculiar to academic writing, they are certainly of importance to it. The extent to which such moves may cause problems to student readers clearly deserves study.

Work in the experimental tradition can help to establish how widespread certain errors in interpretation will prove to be among a population of readers. Comparison between control and experimental groups of learners can also indicate the contribution of a particular variable to the incidence of such problems, in spite of the variation to be expected between individuals on the same task.

In the above individual examples, we saw that subjects had problems in identifying contrasts between a view being reported in a text and the critical or distanced standpoint of the writer reporting it. Earlier experimental studies by Allison (1986; 1991) had investigated comparable reading difficulties among science students, at the University of Botswana (UB), in cases where textbooks presented theories that the textbook writer then went on to show to have been refuted by later scientific discoveries.

This discourse relationship has elsewhere been termed 'Hypothetical-Real' (Hoey, 1983; critical discussion in Allison, *1991: 379-80*). The basic problem was a widespread tendency among readers to take 'Hypothetical' reported theories as correct, despite the subsequent evidence and 'Real' verdict against them in the text. Comparable problems can be anticipated when an author's viewpoint, as inferred by experienced readers, is based on a different line of argumentation or a different value system to reported views that are rejected in the text.

Indications of such reading problems among students at UB had first come from inspection of students' own written summaries of a text; subsequently, experimental work elicited reader responses to test items focusing on the point at issue.

Aims of the study

A study was undertaken by Allison at HKU to document the incidence, in this population, of readers' problems in distinguishing an author's disagreement with views being cited (i.e. in identifying 'Hypothetical-Real' relations) in an instance of academic discourse.

A further aim was to compare outcomes for two sets of instructions, designed to elicit contrasting (selective versus holistic) reading strategies during the task. It was anticipated that readers who were encouraged to study the whole text before answering would tend to score higher than readers attempting to scan through the text to locate answers. For procedural reasons (see Methods section: "limitations"), this prediction was not treated as a formal hypothesis.

Methods

A quasi-experimental study was designed in the summer of 1990, during the writing of one unit of a new 60-hour in-sessional course in English for Social Science students. This course material was piloted in 1990-91 with students on the Bachelor in Business Administration (BBA) programme: the relevant unit was completed in October 1990.

Students

The students taking part in the study were first-year students on the BBA programme at HKU. These students had just completed an intensive 24-hour induction programme which had included introductory work on strategies for reading academic texts. They were in the early stages of a 60-hour in-sessional course designed and taught by the Language Centre and one staff member from the Department of English. Students were taught in six groups, with group size ranging from 13-18. This study was integrated into the teaching programme. It involved a total of 77 students: 40 received the 'selective reading' instructions, and 37 were given the 'holistic reading' instructions.

It should be noted that these HKU students had reached a higher educational level than the pre-entry students in the UB study: they had completed seven as opposed to five years of secondary schooling. On the other hand, most secondary schools in Botswana effectively used English as the medium of instruction. Reportedly, there were only occasional classes in which the national language, Setswana, was used alongside English. The ESL experience of HKU students is likely to have been more variable with respect to the use of English or of Cantonese during secondary school classes.

The co-operation of students and teachers was essential to the success of this study and is gratefully acknowledged.

Text and task

Students had to read a 959 word extract drawn from an introductory sociological text (Giddens, 1986: 9-13). This text was the second reading source for the unit, so the students had already been introduced to some relevant ideas about sociology as an intellectual enterprise. All readers had to respond either 'Yes' or 'No' to each of five test items. There were two different sets of instructions for the activity, in accordance with the experimental variable for the study. (The extract from Giddens (1986) and the alternative sets of instructions are reproduced in appendix C.)

The short test asks readers to decide whether the author would agree with each of five statements. The items of principal interest for the study are 1 and 2. These test items restate views that the author, Giddens, attributes to others (what Comte "claimed" and "believed", or what Durkheim "proposed"), but which he himself later explicitly rejects ("... although this type of standpoint has been very pervasive in sociology, it is one I reject").

Test items 3 and 4, statements actually made by the author, are distractors. Item 5 resembles items 1 and 2 in being a 'Hypothetical' viewpoint that the author rejects, but, for reasons of actual wording, this item would seem less liable to be misinterpreted. This is because the statement matches fairly closely the wording used when the author's own 'Real' viewpoint is presented in the text.

Alternative sets of instructions were designed in order to realize the experimental variable with regard to encouragement of particular reading strategies, respectively 'selective' (Group 1) and 'holistic' (Group 2). Thus, the 'Group 1' instructions call on readers to refer to the passage in order to answer the items, whereas the 'Group 2' instructions tell readers to read the whole passage first before answering the questions. In each class, these instructions were handed out alternately, and readers were urged to follow carefully the instructions they had individually been given.

It has been noted that Giddens' own reporting of the 'Hypothetical' views that feature as test items 1 and 2 precedes his 'Real' rejection of these views in the text. It seems plausible in such cases that selective reading by inexperienced or unwary readers might be specially likely to elicit the unwarranted inference that reporting a viewpoint also entails endorsing that viewpoint. If this were so, the 'selective' readers (Group 1) can be expected, on average, to perform less well on their task than the 'holistic' readers (Group 2). This expectation will be explored in the analysis and discussion of data.

The activity was not a special test session for students but an exercise within the teaching programme. Students handed in their answers for purposes of the research, but kept copies for pair and then whole class discussion. Answers were compared in class immediately after completion of the activity. The teachers commented as needed on the ways in which the author's own viewpoint was signalled in the extract.

Limitations

The term 'quasi-experimental' has been used to emphasize the exploratory nature of this study, which is to be seen as an instance of action research using some experimental techniques. There had been no piloting of the text used, and no previous studies with the reader population being sampled. A full experimental design would have been premature and has not been realized. This is the reason that the study includes no formal testing of a hypothesis.

Specifically, there are two notable limitations in the design. First, the test that was used comprises only five items, three relating to the problem of reported views and two serving as distractor items. Second, the experimental variable -- selective response versus holistic reading of the text -- was only operationalized by means of written and spoken instructions to students. A more rigorous experiment would have had to present materials differently, possibly asking the 'holistic' readers to read the text and summarize its main points before test questions were distributed at all. Besides constraints in preparation time, these design features partly reflect the pedagogic role of the activity in class, which did not require elaborate or lengthy tasks.

There was also some variation in actual spoken instructions. Some teachers just emphasized the need to read the written instructions, while others specified the nature of the two sets of instructions -- thus making explicit the alternative reading approaches that these instructions were attempting to elicit. This was not considered a serious additional problem, with any effect being balanced across Groups 1 and 2, but it would also need to be controlled for in full experimental work.

Statistical treatment

Item facility values for all items will be shown, and descriptive statistics will present scores obtained by readers in the study. I.F. values for items 1 and 2 are relevant to the question of incidence of these readers' problems in recognizing that an author disagrees with views that he cites.

Regarding the additional aim of comparing outcomes for the two treatments, i.e. for the 'holistic' and 'selective' sets of instructions, descriptive statistics for the two groups in the study will be followed by an indication of trends that can be observed. This will be supported by chi-square analysis of each item, using two-tailed tests for statistical significance. This procedure was preferred to comparison of group means, as there are only five test items, only two of which are directly applicable to the purpose. Item content was judged sufficiently distinct to support the assumption that the test items were independent.

It is again emphasized that formal hypothesis-testing is not being undertaken in this quasi-experimental study: the purpose of the statistical testing is to support the exploration of the data obtained and the interpretation of any trends observed.

Results

Table 1 shows item facility values for the whole sample, and also for each of the two groups constituted with reference to the two sets of reading instructions.

Table 1: Item facility values in a reading test calling for recognition of author's viewpoint.

Item no.	Total correct (i)	I.F. value	Group 1 correct (ii)	Gp.1 I.F.	Group 2 correct (iii)	Gp.2 I.F.
1.	44	.57	18	.45	26	.70
2.	52	.68	24	.60	28	.76
3.	53	.69	30	.75	23	.62
4.	62	.80	31	.78	31	.84
5.	68	.88	33	.82	35	.94

(i) 77 students took the test.
(ii) Group 1: 'Selective' reading instructions.
(iii) Group 2: 'Holistic' reading instructions.

Table 2 shows the scores obtained by learners under each of the two conditions (selective versus holistic reading instructions).

Table 2: Distribution of scores (out of 5) obtained in 'selective' and 'holistic' groups, on a reading test calling for recognition of author's viewpoint.

Group 1 ('selective')		Group 2 ('holistic')	
Score	Number of cases	Score	Number of cases
5	7	5	13
4	11	4	11
3	15	3	7
2	7	2	6
1	0	1	0
0	0	0	0

Each test item offered learners a binary choice of yes and no. One question is whether observed total scores for correct answers significantly exceed the value to be expected on the basis of chance (an I.F. of .50). For 'total correct' in Table 1, an I.F. value of at least .62 (representing at least 48 correct responses out of 77) is needed for the result to be statistically significant at .05 level (chi-square test, two-tailed, one degree of freedom) and thus to indicate that performance was better than chance. Overall results show that performance significantly exceeded chance on four items, but failed to do so on item 1. Item 1 also shows the greatest difference in results when Groups 1 and 2 are compared, with the Group 1 success rate being below 50%.

From Table 2, the distribution of scores in Group 2 is markedly non-normal and reflects high success rates for this group on the test, whereas that in Group 1 is closer to a normal distribution. Comparison of I.F. values in Table 1 shows higher values for Group 2 in four cases out of five, including the two Hypothetical-Real items (1 and 2), for which the differences in I.F. values are most marked (differences of .25 for item 1 and .16 for item 2).

Chi-square values for each item were calculated. For item 1, the difference in distribution of results over Groups 1 and 2 yielded a significant chi-square value of 4.033 ($p<.05$, 1d.f., 2-tailed). Item 5 was not tested as expected values fell below 5. Other values were not significant. Results indicate that item 1 was the most difficult of the five, and also that it was significantly more difficult for the group of learners who were instructed to read the text selectively in order to answer the items.

Discussion of Results

Sufficient evidence was obtained to support the view that problems in identifying an author's viewpoint (in the case of Hypothetical - Real relations) will be found quite extensively among readers from this population, and will merit further study as well as pedagogic attention.

There was some indication that a selective answering strategy may exacerbate the incidence of such problems. The use of chi-square to assess differences in distribution of answers over each test item can be criticized, because repeated use of a measure affects 'significance' of outcomes. In this case, however, there were only two items for which an effect was anticipated because the other three items served rather as controls. Furthermore, only a two-tailed significance test was used. It seems reasonable to accept that the trend observed on item 1 can be attributed to something other than chance. It appears likely that for this test item the higher rate of success among readers given 'holistic' instructions was partially a result of the reading strategy being encouraged in that group. Obviously, this issue would need more rigorous and extensive study, involving other learners, texts and tasks, before firm general conclusions could be offered.

One more limitation was suggested by other findings after the study. A mid-course questionnaire revealed that the teaching unit in question received relatively low student ratings for utility and especially for interest. This need not imply that the particular activity we have described was so rated; teacher observation had suggested that the test and immediate feedback successfully focused learner attention on both the task and subsequent discussion of how and why the writer had disclaimed some of the views he cited. Nor would general doubts about level of interest explain why performance should be less successful on a particular test item or under one of two sets of instructions for the task. None the less, we would like to emphasize our earlier warning that results on one reading test may not fully reflect reader performance in other situations. It is for reasons such as this, and not merely as a polite convention, that the usual call for further research is warranted.

Concluding Remarks

Moving from informal impressions of possible reader problems into carefully documented research is important, but is not easy. We are fully conscious that our respective studies have involved a small number of individual subjects or a small number of reading test items, and that more comprehensive research is needed to provide a stronger basis for generalizations. Yet we need not be unduly apologetic. Ours is a field in which generalizations have to be made, by teachers and by administrators, and in which authoritative research in the particular learning context is usually postponed to some ideal future. If generalizations about students' learning problems can become somewhat better informed -- and if the remaining complexities and unresolved questions are made that much more apparent to all concerned -- we believe that it is possible for findings from studies such as our own to be put to sensible use.

In the present case, we have provided reasons to suggest that students' reading problems are more serious and persistent than might have been anticipated, and, in particular, that readers' difficulties in identifying the critical stance of authors towards viewpoints being reported concessively or contrastively could usefully be addressed by teachers of English for academic purposes. For this, we would emphasize the value of individual face-to-face discussions in which students are induced to articulate their interpretations of texts and linguistic grounds for reaching these interpretations. We would also argue in favour of whole-text or extended extract rather than piecemeal search reading when the aim is to determine authorial viewpoint.

NOTES

1. The recent literature on classroom language learning research encourages exploratory and qualitative studies in order to generate insights, and to throw light on particular situations and experiences, without too much concern for immediately demonstrable generalizability of findings: see, e.g., van Lier (1988). This cannot mean that workers in our field no longer regard hypothesis-testing and generalizability as important, but it indicates that we have learned how difficult it is even for experimental research to furnish conclusions that are valid beyond particular situations. The need for comprehensive and rigorous study before broad claims are made has to be respected if applied linguistics is to remain a responsible mode of enquiry. See also Chaudron (1988).

REFERENCES

Alderson J. Charles and Urquhart, A. H. (eds.) 1984. *Reading in a Foreign Language*. London: Longman.

Allison, Desmond 1986. 'An investigation into the perception, by non-native users of English, of selected features of lexical and rhetorical texture in instructional scientific discourse'. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Reading.

Allison, Desmond 1991. 'Textual explicitness and pragmatic inferencing: the case of 'Hypothetical - Real' contrasts in written instructional scientific discourse in English'. *Journal of Pragmatics 15: 373-393.*

Berger, Peter L. 1963. *Invitation to Sociology.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Carrell, Patricia 1988. 'Introduction: Interactive approaches to second language reading'. In Carrell, Patricia, Devine, Joanna and Eskey, David (eds.) 1988. *Interactive Approaches to Second Language Reading*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chaudron, Craig 1988. *Second Language Classrooms: Research on teaching and learning.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Faerch, Claus and Kasper, Gabriele (eds.) 1987. *Introspection in Second Language Research.* Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters.

Giddens, Anthony 1986. *Sociology: A brief but critical introduction.* London: Macmillan Education.

Hoey, Michael 1983. *On the Surface of Discourse.* London: Allen & Unwin.

Steffenson, Margaret S. 1986. 'Register, cohesion and cross-cultural reading comprehension'. *Applied Linguistics* 7/1: 71-85.

Van Lier, Leo 1988. *The Classroom and the Language Learner.* London and New York: Longman.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Letter in South China Morning Post (23/7/1990)(reproduced with permission).

Discuss this matter openly

While listening to the debate leading up to the recent decision to abolish the law on homosexuality, I got the impression that most people see being homosexually-orientated as an abnormal, hopeless condition which only deserves polite words of consolation.

They fail to realise that a homosexually-orientated person goes through a very human and not uncommon struggle. It is ludicrous to think that a homosexual ever chose to be attracted to his own sex.

A crucial distinction must be made between sexually-active homosexuals and people with a homosexual orientation who have not entered into a homosexual relationship. The first group has made a voluntary decision to lead a homosexual lifestyle, while the second still desires to deal with the problem without giving in to his desires.

A homosexually-orientated person will go through a difficult period of confusion and alienation while trying to define his identity. Acceptance and encouragement from family and friends are paramount in keeping him from resorting to homosexual relationships to obtain the love and the acceptance he needs.

Homosexuals are no more at fault for their feelings than heterosexuals are for being tempted. How we choose to deal with the temptations is another matter, and therefore we need an openness to discussing homosexuality which is brave and patient yet does not compromise moral standards. Relying on laws or brushing off the problem as a repugnant disease requiring clinical therapy will definitely not protect Hongkong from what it fears the most, wide-spread homosexual activity.

To homosexuals still struggling with their feelings, let's continue to work towards better things.

RAYMOND CHIU
University of Toronto

Appendix B

Letter in South China Morning Post (31/8/1990)(reproduced with permission).

Smoking ban on planes unnecessary

In recent weeks there have been several letters about smoking on aircraft, and this month an article has appeared in part suggesting that non-smokers may be at real risk from exposure to passengers who happen to be enjoying a cigarette.

With the World Health Organisation and the British Medical Association calling for a total ban on airline smoking, it is high time that a few basic facts were aired on a subject which has become contentious for no good reason.

Whatever anti-smoking activists may say, there simply is no reputable scientific consensus which can support so-called "passive smoking" as a serious health hazard.

All the comment is based upon opinion which deplorably has been presented as fact, now believed as gospel by many smokers and non-smokers alike. This is especially unfortunate as new research is emerging which is illustrating how flawed and uncertain some of the earlier work has been.

Other people's tobacco smoke may well be a nuisance or an irritation for some, in certain circumstances, but on aeroplanes in particular, the interior airflow system and the change of cabin air content, every few minutes, militates against any significant problem.

Moreover if airlines chose to increase the cabin airflow rates, which would be no bad thing for a number of reasons, together with raising what is often a most uncomfortably low level of humidity, the opportunity for complaint by non-smokers would disappear completely.

It is true that such measures would cost the airlines money, but the increased costs would be extremely small, such as adding less than HK$5 to the price of a seat from Hongkong to Singapore.

Interestingly, flight deck crews enjoy a cubic foot per minute rate of ventilation around the 150 mark, whereas a passenger norm is seven.

An accepted comfort level should be no less than 20 cfm. And when humidity ought to be at 40 per cent, on long haul flights, passengers commonly experience as little as two per cent. So airlines have some responsibility to make a few housekeeping improvements themselves, including better screening from fuel vapours and ozone, instead of taking the all too easy option of blaming the visible tobacco smoke for those dry eyes, sore throats and the general lassitude so familiar to regular air travellers. Research has revealed that tobacco smoke in aeroplanes has next to nothing to do with such symptoms.

Even the chance of cancer from cosmic radiation while flying has been held to offer a higher statistical risk than health problems from airline smoking, but what do we ever hear about cosmic radiation, or being somehow screened from that? You have a predicted death rate from this radiation being discounted as minor, and of no genuine concern in terms of statistical risk, while the practically negligible alleged statistical risk from "passive smoking" is cited as a reason for a worldwide ban!

Finally, have the airlines fairly asked their passengers, a large minority of whom would like a facility to smoke on board, whether these bans are either welcome or necessary?

The level of complaint about smoking on aircraft is in truth extremely low, and an example from the US makes the point. Over a 10 year period there, only a single smoking complaint was received for every one million passenger miles flown.

So just where is the groundswell of opinion pushing the airlines into ignoring the personal freedoms of people who wish to take pleasure from a relaxing smoke while flying?

A.D.C. TURNER
Managing Director
Asian Tobacco Council

Appendix C

Extract from Giddens (1986) and two task sheets.

READING (2). **SOCIOLOGY: A Definition**

> ... In the light of these remarks, a definition can be offered of the subject as follows. Sociology is a social science, having as its main focus the study of the social institutions brought into being by the industrial transformations of the past two or three centuries...
>
> ...Many of the prominent thinkers associated with the development of sociology were impressed with the importance of science and technology in contributing to the changes they witnessed. In setting out the aims of sociology, therefore, they sought to duplicate, in the study of human social affairs, the successes of the natural sciences in explaining the material world. Sociology was to be a 'natural science of society'. Auguste Comte, who lived from 1798 to 1857, and who coined the term 'sociology', gave this view its clearest and most comprehensive formulation. All the sciences, he claimed, including sociology, share an overall framework of logic and method; all seek to uncover universal laws governing the particular phenomena with which they deal. If we discover the laws governing human society, Comte believed, we will be able to shape our own destiny in much the same way as science has allowed us to control events in the natural world. His famous formula, Prévoir pour pouvoir (to be able to predict is to be able to control), expresses this idea.
>
> Since Comte's time, the notion that sociology should be fashioned upon the natural sciences has been the dominant view of the subject - although it has certainly not gone unchallenged, and has also been expressed in various differing ways. Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), one of the most influential figures in the development of sociology in the twentieth century, continued some of Comte's emphases. Sociology, he declared, is concerned with 'social facts', which can be approached in the same objective way as the facts with which the natural sciences deal. In his short, but very influential book The Rules of Sociological Method (1895), Durkheim proposed that social phenomena should be treated like things: we should regard ourselves as though we were objects in nature. Thereby he accentuated the similarities between sociology and natural science.

As I have mentioned earlier, although this type of standpoint has been very pervasive in sociology, it is one I reject. To speak of sociology, and of other subjects like anthropology or economics, as 'social sciences', is to stress that they involve the systematic study of an empirical subject-matter. The terminology is not confusing so long as we see that sociology and other social sciences differ from the natural sciences in two essential respects.

(1) We cannot approach society, or 'social facts', as we do objects or events in the natural world, because societies only exist in so far as they are created and re-created in our own actions as human beings. In social theory, we cannot treat human activities as though they were determined by causes in the same way as natural events are. We have to grasp what I would call the double involvement of individuals and institutions: we create society at the same time as we are created by it. Institutions, I have said, are patterns of social activity reproduced across time and space. It is worthwhile reflecting for a moment upon what this involves. To speak of the 'reproduction' of social conduct or social systems is to speak of the repetition of similar patterns of activity by actors separated from each other in time and space. It is very important indeed to stress this point, because much social theory - including that of Durkheim - is pervaded by a tendency to think in terms of physical imagery, a tendency which can have damaging consequences. Social systems involve patterns of relationships among individuals and groups. Many sociologists picture these patterns as rather like the walls of a building, or the skeleton of a body. This is misleading because it implies too static or unchanging an image of what societies are like: because it does not indicate that the patterning of social systems only exists in so far as individuals actively repeat particular forms of conduct from one time and place to another. If we were to use this sort of imagery at all, we should have to say that social systems are like buildings that are at every moment constantly being reconstructed by the very bricks that compose them.

(2) It follows from this that the practical implications of sociology are not directly parallel to the technological uses of science, and cannot be. Atoms cannot get to know what scientists say about them, or change their behaviour in the light of that knowledge. Human beings can do so. Thus the relation between sociology and its 'subject-matter' is necessarily different from that involved in the natural sciences. If we regard social activity as a mechanical set of events, determined by natural laws, we both misunderstand the past and fail to grasp how sociological analysis can help influence our possible future. As human beings, we do not just live in history; our understanding of history is an integral part of what that history is, what it may become. This is why we cannot be content with Comte's idea of *Prévoir pour pouvoir*, seen as social technology. In the social sciences, we are addressing other human beings, not an inert world of objects. It is often precisely by showing that what may appear to those involved as inevitable, as unchallengeable - as resembling a law of nature - is, in fact, an historical product, that sociological analysis can play an emancipatory role in human society. At the same time, sociological analysis teaches sobriety. For although knowledge may be an important adjunct to power, it is not the same as power. And our knowledge of history is always tentative and incomplete.

Source: Giddens, Anthony (1986), *Sociology*: A brief but critical introduction (second edition). London: Macmillan Education. Extracts from pages 9-13.

Reading 2: Task sheet.

Group 1: *Instructions.* Complete the task individually. Then pair up with a member of Group 2.

Answer the items below one by one, by referring selectively to the passage. Do not change any answers once you have written them.

As soon as you have finished, make a copy of your answers for your own reference (Just copy your answers, not the question items). Then immediately hand in this task sheet. Then read the whole passage.

Questions. Below are five statements. Does the writer (Giddens) agree with them? Answer YES or NO in each case.

1. Aims and methods of sociology should be modelled upon the natural sciences.

1. Answer: ________

2. Sociology should treat 'social facts' like things in nature.

2. Answer: ________

3. We can call sociology a 'social science' to emphasise its systematic study of empirical subject matter (subject matter that can be observed and measured).

3. Answer: ________

4. Social systems involve patterns of relationships among individuals and groups.

4. Answer: ________

5. Practical applications of sociology are like the technological applications of science.

5. Answer: ________

Name of student: ____________________________

Remember to make a copy of your answers before you hand in this completed task sheet.

Reading 2: Task sheet.

Group 2: *Instructions.* Complete the task individually. Then pair up with a member of Group 1.

Read the whole passage first. Then answer the questions below. Do not change any answers once you have written them.

As soon as you have finished, make a copy of your answers for your own reference (Just copy your answers, not the question items). Then immediately hand in this task sheet.

Questions. Below are five statements. Does the writer (Giddens) agree with them? Answer YES or NO in each case.

1. Aims and methods of sociology should be modelled upon the natural sciences.

1. Answer: ________

2. Sociology should treat 'social facts' like things in nature.

2. Answer: ________

3. We can call sociology a 'social science' to emphasise its systematic study of empirical subject matter (subject matter that can be observed and measured).

3. Answer: ________

4. Social systems involve patterns of relationships among individuals and groups.

4. Answer: ________

5. Practical applications of sociology are like the technological applications of science.

5. Answer: ________

Name of student: ______________________________

Remember to make a copy of your answers before you hand in this completed task sheet.

HONGKONG PAPERS IN LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE TEACHING 14 (1991) ISSN 1015-2059

TYPOLOGICAL TRANSFER, DISCOURSE ACCENT AND THE CHINESE WRITER OF ENGLISH

Christopher Green
Institute of Language in Education, Hong Kong

Introduction

In recent years, interlanguage studies have been characterised by a concern to formulate and test hypotheses of a universal order of second language acquisition (SLA). This exciting and exacting preoccupation has led to a de-emphasising of the influence of the native language (NL) on the acquisition of a target language (TL). However, as Rutherford (1983) argues, there is no reason to suppose that notions of a universal order of acquisition exclude consideration of the proposal that TL acquisition may be shaped, coloured and accented in varying degrees by the transfer of typological features from NL.

This realisation has prompted investigation into a wide range of crosslinguistic influences. Gundel and Tarone's (1983) psycholinguistic exploration of the acquisition of a feature of English discourse cohesion (pronominal anaphora) by Chinese and Spanish students is illustrative of this trend. Odlin's (1989) enquiry, sociolinguistic in orientation, evaluates the evidence for the transfer of politeness conventions in the interpersonal communication of German learners of English. Trevise's (1986) examination of the evidence supporting the notion that French is in the process of becoming topic-prominent in terms of an information-oriented ordering of syntactic constituents is entirely relevant to the concerns of this paper.

It is worth noting that investigations into this kind of transfer complement rather than attempt to invalidate or replace a more traditional, parts-focussed contrastive analysis. Wong (1988) has argued strongly that, at sentence level, many examples of language production perceived as demonstrating typological influence many be accounted for in terms of incomplete mastery of TL morpho-syntactic systems. Two aspects of the same acquisition problem are perhaps in evidence here. The native speakers of a topic-prominent (t-p) language, and indeed t-p languages themselves tend to have reduced grammatical systems, may be predisposed to transfer this prominence and, at the same time, to have a great deal of work to do in acquiring the grammaticisation demanded by a subject-prominent TL. The point surely is that both processes are at work simultaneously and do not stand in mutual contradiction or exclusion.

However, Wong does not deny the possible existence of typological transfer, and one way out of this impasse is to investigate the possible influence of fossilised typological manifestations on the accent of longer stretches of discourse, since at the interface of segmental and pragmatic comparisons of NL and TL is the ordering of sentence constituents as information-bearers. The present study then is located at that interface: a location which Halliday (1985: xvii) appears to view as an essential point of departure for the principled analysis of discourse:

> A text is a semantic unit, not a grammatical one. But meanings are realised through wordings; and without a theory of wordings - that is, a grammar - there is no way of making explicit one's interpretation of the meaning of a text.

Halliday (op.cit.: xxii) again:

> A text is meaningful because it is an actualisation of the potential that

> constitutes the linguistic system; it is for this reason that the study of discourse (text linguistics) cannot properly be separated from the study of the grammar that lies behind it.

My main interest is enquiring into topic-prominence in Cantonese interlanguage stages of English. This is so because word ordering concerns are naturally subsumed under an enquiry into the operations of topic. I take it as axiomatic that topic-prominence is conceived in the psychological deep structure, that topic bears information which provides a frame of reference for the written discourse in which it appears (that is until another topic is selected as the discourse develops) and with Thompson (1978) that ordering of syntactic constituents is the surface structure realisation of topic-prominence. First however it is necessary to examine Cantonese typologically for topic-prominent surface structure manifestations to adduce evidence to support these initial claims.

Surface Structure Parameters of Topic-Prominence derived from Spoken Cantonese

1. Absence of the empty-subject place-holders required to preserve grammatical word order in English, "there is" and "it is":

   好熱！

   Very hot!
   It's hot!

2. Appearance of "heavy" double subjects where the first (locative or temporal adverbial) subject functions as topic in the information structure:

   中國大陸啲人居住環境好差。

   China mainland people living conditions very poor.
   People in mainland China live in very poor conditions.

3. Topic, not grammatical subject, controls redundant co-referential pronoun deletion:

   佢姐姐煮嗰啲炒飯好差所以我冇食。

   His sister cook that fried rice very badly so I not eat.
   His sister prepared the fried rice very badly so I did not eat it.

4. Topic takes a predicate but this is not necessarily a verb as in English. Thus, "serial" verbs occur with no proximal subjects. At certain interlanguage stages this lack of subject is compensated for by the use of sentence-initial existential "there is/are":

   有好多人想移民。

   Have many people want emigrate.
   *There are many people want to emigrate.
   Many people want to emigrate.

Generally speaking Chinese verbs are not oriented to the explication of actor-object relations which is, of course, their primary function in English.

5. Relatively free choice as to the constituent selected as topic. English too tolerates some choice but then questions of marked and unmarked language use come into play. This point is picked up and amplified later.

6. The premodification of head noun by constituents which would be embedded in English:

住喺大城市嘅美國人多數好窮.

Live in big cities America people often very poor.
American people living in big cities are often poor.

7. Early and prominent (sentence-initial) announcement of topic as a frame of reference for the ensuing discourse:

老板個房喺邊?

Boss's office is where?
Where is the boss's office?

嗰件事我係負責人.

That matter I am responsible person.
I am in charge of that matter.

8. Marginalisation of the use of the passive construction. Interlanguage samples which appear to be failed attempts to use the passive in English may in fact be interpreted as topic-comment formulations:

Topic *Comment*
Film in Hong Kong,/can buy very cheap.
One can buy film in Hong Kong very cheaply.
*Film in Hong Kong can be bought very cheaply.

The relatively rare appearance of passives in Chinese is perhaps not surprising. As a naturally topic-prominent language it has no need of a transformation which is used to foreground the objective information focus of a particular sentence in subject-prominent languages. Zhou and Feng (1983) provide evidence for the corollary of this; that only a small number of English passive constructions may be translated directly into Chinese.

There is a real need to carry out research in this area of Chinese-English interlanguage, since Cantonese learners, as distinct from Mandarin NL subjects, have received little attention in terms oftypological analyses of their TL production. Exceptions to this are Leung (1987) and Sung (forthcoming, 1991). There is, of course, good reason for the a priori assumption that Cantonese learners will produce similar results to Mandarin subjects since the major dialects of Chinese share a similar written code and major linguistic systems, but this assumption should not go unanalysed or untested, particularly in view of the fact that, in the Hong Kong context, students have to operate in Cantonese, written Modern Standard Chinese and English. The interflow of crosslinguistic influences is complex and subtle, and it may be difficult to trace associated transfer features accurately to source. The diglossic situation just described with regard to Modern Standard Chinese and Cantonese makes it all the more important to emphasise that this paper is primarily concerned with Cantonese subjects, and is underpinned by the belief that these subjects frame their written English output broadly in accordance with the norms of spoken Cantonese.

The most severe linguistic trials of the Cantonese learner of English may revolve, then, around the central issue of perceiving and successfully producing the intricate subject-predicate frameworks needed to carry and develop thematic information in English. However, transfer of topic-prominence to English cannot be assumed unless the necessary and sufficient conditions discussed below are fulfilled.

A Theoretical Basis

1. NL and TL must be similar, to some crucial extent,in the possibilities available for the ordering of sentential constituents. If the possibilities for word order are radically different then transfer is much less likely to occur.

2. A feature available for potential transfer is likely to be an unmarked option in the surface coding of NL, and is transferable to TL via:

   a) the learner's increasing, but intuitive and tacit, awareness of this NL feature.

   b) the learner's simultaneous lack of awareness of the marked and unmarked option possibilities and restrictions this feature possesses in the TL.

These conditions are similar to those proposed by Jordens and Kellerman (1981) and are in broad concurrence with Meisel's view (1981) that the clearest-cut evidence for NL influence on TL production is to be found in word order, since this phenomenon is so rarely transferred in its entirety. 2b is my own formulation. Some elaboration might be helpful in explaining these conditions. With regard to 1, for example, native speakers of Japanese, a prototypically SOV language, apparently never transfer verb-final ordering to SVO English (Rutherford op. cit). For transfer to take place there must be a degree of what might be termed "apparency" through which a syntactic feature of NL is felt to be sufficiently close to TL norms as to justify logical mapping. In terms of word order, Cantonese is an SVO language, but not as rigidly so as English, since it appears to allow pragmatic and information-imparting protocols to predominate over formal syntactic concerns. This syntactic flexibility allows discourse topic to be emphasised over grammatical subject. A degree of propositional explicitness is present which English muffles under a dense layer of grammaticisation. Hawkins comparing English and German syntax (1980, and quoted in Rutherford) had this to say:

> English speakers have, in effect, more work to do in extracting meaning from form. They must systematically exclude contextually inappropriate interpretations from ambiguous and semantically diverse surface structures; they must reconstruct semantic argument-predicate relations over often large syntactic domains; and they must infer semantically relevant material which is not present in surface form.

This argument recurs as the discussion of the whole subject develops. However, the point which needs to be made clear here is that Cantonese and English fulfil the first condition for transferability of word order form NL to TL, that of apparent similarity of word order.

The second condition relates to the SLA stage at which learners become increasingly aware of typological features of NL, but not of the possibilities and restrictions that exist for these features in TL. It is reasonably safe to assume with Sung (op.cit) that Cantonese, like Mandarin, is located on the language typology continuum rather closer to the pragmatic word order (PWO) end, while English occupies a position very close to the grammatical word order (GWO) extreme. A PWO language is so oriented as to allow the communicational imperatives of imparting information and providing clarity of reference to dominate word order norms. In sharp contrast to this, GWO languages require fairly rigid adherence to syntactic norms, even to the extent that semantically-empty place-holders are used to retain fundamental syntax, no matter what the discoursal and pragmatic requirements of the context.

Markedness

To this point, I have been referring to unmarked language options. Once marked variants are considered (in English, samples not having grammatical subject in thematic sentence-initial position) the contrast referred to begins to assume the quality of deceptive apparency that is a necessary precondition for transfer. Now, PWO I take to be an unmarked option for word ordering in Cantonese and, in concurrence with the second condition above, this ordering is available for transfer to TL when and as learners become increasingly aware of it as a basic shaping feature of their NL. Learners then transfer the feature, more or less overtly or covertly depending on level of proficiency, to a GWO TL which either does not tolerate the feature (in which case a gross error is clearly in evidence) or has the feature as a marked option (the manifestation may then be grammatically-sound but "odd" or "strong" in tone to the TL native speaker). In the latter case, the learner has strayed into marked TL language use, because of the retention of PWO from NL. Higher proficiency learners seem to utilise a range of devices to accomplish this retention, perhaps consciously to avoid jarringly basilectal TL output. The following authentic samples, taken from the academic writing of young adult post-intermediate level students studying English as part of a programme of vocational training, illustrate this point:

Device *Defined Topic* *Comment*
1. **For/those staff who acted as senior ones,**/they earn more salary.

Device *Defined Topic* *Comment*
2. **According to/our calculations on this matter,**/it shows that we will have lack of time.

Device *Defined Topic*
3. **Concerning/our academic report belong to vocational studies,/**

Comment
it must be written up carefully and well presented.

In these examples the early and emphatic (marked) appearance of topic is followed by, in information structure terms, a comment on it. That the sentences above are conceived in topic-comment terms is supported by the precise placement of a comma at the topic-comment boundary, and by the undeleted co-referential pronoun which picks up and reinforces the intra-sentential influence of the topic.

Topicalisation then is a psychological entity manifested by the wording chosen to realise its primary role in Cantonese, that is as a point of departure or reference for the ensuing discourse. Lower proficiency learners by contrast, tend to produce TL language samples which are largely stripped of any attempt to mask the topicalising influence of the NL. Their TL production, as one would expect, is closer to NL norms and, in particular, the exophorically-oriented norms of spoken NL:

Topic *Comment*
Hong Kong's complicated traffic problem,/it will need many people to solve.

It is rarely possible to account for the overall "oddness" of much of the writing produced by Cantonese learners in terms of the sum total of low-level lexicostructural errors present in particular texts. However, taking the point of departure for contrastive analysis at the macrostructural level of whole text presents problems too. Kaplan's pioneering (1966) hypothesis of the transfer of non-linear rhetorical organisation to a discourse-linear TL by Chinese learners of English takes as its point of departure the comparison of the Anglo-American academic essay and the classical Chinese composition. Kaplan detected digressive circularity and frequent occurences of tangential viewpoint in the English writing of Chinese subjects which he assumed was transferred from NL writing and reflected "oriental" patterns of thought.

More recently Malcolm and Hongjio (1988) have produced empirical data which seems to suggest that English native-speaker writers of expository compositions follow the linear process of structural development **Situation--Problem--Solution--Evaluation**, while Chinese writers of English in the same genre might sometimes use the NL pattern **Thesis--Development of Thesis--Contrast to Thesis--Indefinite Conclusion**. Despite the obvious interest of this line of enquiry it is not of direct relevance to the concerns of the present study. It is also important to make clear that the research findings available were all extremely tentative, and that the "oriental" thought patterns detected in samples of English writing may in fact be ascribed more accurately to developmental rather than transfer influences (Mohan and Lo, 1985).

To return to matters of direct concern, English does, of course, allow topicalisation to occur in marked information structure. As an alternative to unmarked forms such as:

Subject *Predicate*
Tony/likes Smith's ideas on education.

One might find marked object fronting:

Topic *Comment*
With regard to education,/Tony likes Smith's ideas.

Or participant as topic:

Topic *Comment*
As for Tony,/he likes Smith's ideas on education.

However, such marked constructions lose their emphatic quality when a writer overproduces them. For this reason these constructions are comparatively infrequent in native-speaker written production. My assumption, again in line with the second condition above, is that Cantonese learners become aware of the PWO (topicalising) nature of their NL but not that this constitutes restricted marked usage in a fundamentally GWO language like English.

Elicitation Procedure

I decided to carry out a small-scale procedure to elicit the production of topicalised structures in the English of mature, high proficiency students. I targeted this group since I wanted to ensure a relative paucity of the surface lexicogrammatical errors that can make detection of transferred discourse phenomena so opaque and indeterminate.

Using the Oxford Placement (Structure) Test Parts 3B1 and 3B2 (Allan, 1985) I selected the fifty highest-scoring students from one hundred and thirty to take part in the elicitation activity. A word is in order about the test instrument in that extensive trialling in my institute has shown that OPT 3 discriminates far more effectively among Cantonese native-speaker subjects than the other structure tests in that series. The students selected all scored 160 or above in the test. This correlates to upper-intermediate to advanced status in terms of international measures of language proficiency in English.

I then set a short writing task entitled "How the changing roles of husbands and wives is affecting marriage and the family in Asia"; a propositionally rich and syntactically complex topic. My intention was to elicit only a few lines of unmonitored and uncorrected TL production from each student, so a time limit of just 10 minutes was imposed.

Findings and Discussion

There was no occurrence of structures that could be construed as "putative passives", or of incorrect co-referential pronoun deletion, heavy double subjects or extensive premodification of head noun. However, there were occurences of very emphatic topic announcement through the overt fronting of objective information; the so-called "Ross-topicalisation" (cited in Barry, 1975: 8) and subjects did avail themselves of a relative free choice in the selection of the constituent identified as topic. Interestingly, the corpus contained nine existential + serial verbs constructions. Most higher proficiency learners had clearly passed through the SLA stage at which TL production is characterised by gross NL influence, but it does seem that, lacking the empty subject in NL, even the subjects under consideration were hypersensitive to this contrasting TL feature and overcompensated by using the existential + serial verbs construction unnecessarily. The sample below is taken from the corpus:

> There are many young and educated Asian women nowadays want
> to marry but cannot because they lack suitable partners to select.

The difficulty in attribution of topic-prominence at high levels of proficiency is highlighted by this example. It could be claimed that the student has simply failed to supply the subject co-referential pronoun "who" to lead the embedding of the subsequent defining clause; the incomplete mastery of TL systems argument. However, I tend to favour the interpretation that the sentence was conceived in topic-prominent terms; the extended topic here, as with all topics, controls co-referential pronoun deletion. Indeed, the non-appearance of the pronoun many be interpreted as a typologically-induced failure to conform to subject-predicate norms; the relative pronoun here being needed to fill the grammatical subject slot to take second predicate "want". This interpretation considers the observed wording as the surface structure manifestation of language conceived primarily in terms of topic-prominence.

To return to the data, apart from the nine sentences mentioned above, a further twenty-eight sentences were analysable as topic-prominent in construction; together these sentences represented about 18% of the data. Most in the latter group were, as already indicated, examples of "Ross-topicalisation". A number of these are displayed and discussed below:

> Concerning the family, it will benefit from the changing roles. It will be enhanced by
> the husbands' new role of child rearing aid. It is because previously the husband
> gave no aid.

The device used here to herald the topic, is a direct translation of Chinese 關於. A topic-prominent language clearly has need of such introductory, defining devices, but in marked English information structure "as for ..." or "with regard to..." or "on the subject of..." etc are the acceptable forms. Sentence-initial use of "concerning" in a left-dislocated topic in English is nearly always used to refer to something known to all participants in the discourse and the whole topic construction is often followed by grammatical subject to restore SVO ordering as rapidly as possible:

Concerning the trip to Paris, I was wondering if we could cancel it.

The unmarked word order option would, of course, give sentence-initial prominence to grammatical subject with the information focus falling on the object complement.

I was wondering if we could cancel that trip to Paris.

The three semantic units available for selection as topic in the title viz. changing roles of husbands and wives, marriage, and family were in fact all topicalised in the data. The student below chose changing roles to begin the piece:

> Change in the roles of the genders, it has come about due to many external factors. It is because nowadays both partners must go out to work and therefore have the same responsibilities in the house.

Not only is the topic announced emphatically, but the topic-related pronoun picks up, reinforces and carries the topicalised constituent through the discourse. The second (sentence-initial) pronoun may be taken as evidence of the inter-sentential potential of topic. It is worth reiterating the fact that this type of topicalisation in TL always involves the precise placement of a comma at the topic-comment boundary; a surface representation of the deep structure process in operation.

The following example is a very sophisticated one, combining notions of both marriage and professional desires in contrast:

> For many people who wish to get married but who also wish to fulfill professional ambitions in a wider context, they must develop a wide range of domestic and occupational skills as well as possess unlimited energy!

The sentence stands first in the piece of writing and demonstrates a very impressive degree of control and embedding, but all within a "softened" version of the topic-comment framework retained from NL. A final example of the deep-structure conception of topic and its pervasiveness even at higher levels of proficiency is given below:

> According to research evidence, it shows that more Asian couples are getting divorced nowadays.

The frame of reference "my research" holds an importance and influence over the discourse that it does not possess in the native-speaker options displayed below:

> According to my research, more Asian couples are getting divorced nowadays.

or

> More Asian couples are getting divorced nowadays according to my research.

or

> My research shows that more Asian couples are getting divorced nowadays.

Discourse Accent

It can be argued, then, that in the examples information is being processed and presented in a manner very different from the way a native speaker would carry out these operations. Chinese discourse frames seem to be intruding into English syntax and the effect is both powerful and puzzling, since often, but by no means always, the TL used is ordered in a syntactically marked way and, as such, breaks the given-new contract underlying English information structure. If enough marked "contract-breaking" topicalisations are present in the text, the impression conveyed to the native-speaker reader of English will be of disjointed and fragmented development of the messages embodied in the discourse.

The quality of staccato "horizontal listing" which pervades a good deal of the written English discourse produced by Cantonese learners could be related to topicalisation and the naturally co-occuring lack of embedded thematic elements, and concomitant non-appearance of adequate cohesive ties. This is not surprising if, in the deep structure, the learner conceives his TL surface coding in a topic-prominent manner. In a topic-prominent NL, a topic stands at the head of the discourse and the ensuing discourse is taken by the producer and the receiver to be related to it until a new topical referent is introduced. Subject-prominent languages like English, however, undergo a complex, involuted process of textualisation to achieve a tightly-spun, almost opaque surface structure. Discourse ties are usually representational and non-repetitive and so are very different in kind from the over-explicit and seemingly illogical (in English) use of certain transferred semantic markers commonly found in the writing of Chinese students. Consider in particular, 而且 and 另一方面 (translated inaccurately as "moreover" and "besides" respectively in many Chinese-English dictionaries) which stand at the head of a paragraph in Chinese and predetermine the topical range of the paragraph content. A tentative claim may be advanced that semantic markers are topical and explicit in Chinese whereas English, particularly in written mode, demands conformity to a code of implicit internal coherence and cohesion.

Topic and Theme

Halliday (op.cit.) has demonstrated convincingly that English information structure is theme, and not topic, driven. There are many different kinds of theme but all appear in sentence initial position. Among these thematic variants is topical theme; often a simple, one-part device using subject, complement or adjunct to convey ideational information:

Topical Theme *Rheme*
Marriage / cannot remain the same in Asia.

More complex themes are the norm, however, in English once the frame of reference has been established. These typically deliver interpersonal and textual components to express viewpoint and form cohesive links within the discourse.

Complex Theme *Rheme*
I doubt very much whether marriage in Asia/can remain the same.

Given-New

In both examples above the Given-New contract is retained intact, but the topical themes found in Chinese, if transferred to English, always have the potential to suddenly introduce a new point of departure or frame of reference in a non-anaphoric way.

That said, whether the Given-New contract is broken or not depends on the position in the context at which a new topic is announced. Clearly if new referents introduce a focus of information not recoverable from the foregoing text, then the Given-New sequence will be reversed. The examples given so far from the experimental corpus do meet English Given-New expectations, because in each case the topic necessarily relates back to the title of the piece of writing. An example from the corpus that does break these expectations is this sentence which began a new paragraph immediately following on from a paragraph of discussion on the Asian woman's relative lack of freedom in the choosing of a husband:

Topic/New
For the Western women's concept of freedom,

Comment/Given
it can allow them to make their own decisions who to marry.

Rhetorically, expressing such a contrast often requires breaking Given-New expectations to deliver the necessary sharp comparison with the preceding topic. However, Chinese writers in English tend to break the contract rather too frequently and probably unintentionally, conferring qualities of suddeness, overemphasis and perhaps incoherence to the text.

Topics, including the extended, defined types already exemplified, are able to stand independent of, or absorb to a limited extent, other syntactic components. Complex themes in English, however, tend to aggregate other components together and assign overall primacy to the subject-verb arguments they subsume. Thematisation itself has cohesive, as well as expressive properties in that it provides a mode of binding ideational, interpersonal and textual elements tightly together. In so doing the information to be conveyed is made more implicit. Topic, in contrast, requires fewer components and ties in its composition since it has the function of making points of reference and ideational information focii immediately explicit.

Interestingly the elicited corpus revealed evidence of reduced textual and interpersonal material. Expression of subjective viewpoint, for example, was remarkably infrequent and thus most texts conveyed an overall sense of depersonalisation. I am not putting forward a Whorfian reductionist view that topicalisation and its associated simplification of thematic structure in English is the primary cause of this. It is perhaps more likely that this suppression of personal engagement in the world view is induced by historical patterns of cultural behaviour (Bond, 1986: 85) and that appropriate language devices evolved simply to convey rather than in any way determine, cultural thought patterns.

Directions for Future Research

It hardly needs to be pointed out how preliminary the investigations reported here are. The richness and complexity of this area of enquiry mean that any statements or findings must necessarily be treated as tentative and incomplete; the more so when the very small-scale nature of the empirical study carried out is recalled. Such a preliminary enquiry is bound to raise more questions than it can hope to satisfactorily address. Certainly most of the key issues remain unresolved. The following list might offer useful suggestions for directions of future research. Lines of enquiry might include:

- How the different properties of subject and topic might affect morphemic grammatical accuracy. For example, subject-verb agreement.

- Convergencies and divergencies of topic and theme, and differences in accent between topic-driven and theme-driven discourse.

- How a newly-introduced topic in context can break the given-new contract in English; in particular the effective range of this dislocation requires careful study.

- The use of pronominal anaphora by Chinese learners of English and its link to topic-comment organisation. In particular, the use of representational "it" rather than demonstrative "this " in the reference cohesion system of English.

- The connections between notions of markedness in written Chinese and English. A systematic analysis and comparison to detect similarities and differences might well shed a great deal of light on the interlanguage of Chinese learners of English. It might also be interesting, as a corollary to much of the discussion above, to seek evidence for the possible effects of English typological organisation on the Modern Standard Chinese writing of Cantonese users of English.

- The development of reference and instructional materials based on the principles of contrastive information structure and rhetoric to raise learner awareness of the problem. As Li and Thompson (1976) have made clear, existing reference materials have limitations:

> ...it is often difficult to determine the typology of a language ... on the basis of reference grammars since such grammars are biased towards the subject-predicate analysis.

Pedagogical approaches might profitably focus on contrastive consciousness-raising activities, initially at sentence level, since this is the starting point for the meaningful organisation of information. In the Hong Kong context this is important since many learners, even those at tertiary level, are unable to produce complex sentences with complete clausal embedding and intra-sentential cohesion. Work could then proceed to the higher levels of text macrostructure. This process would afford the ideal opportunity for fruitful co-operation between native and non-native teachers of English.

This paper has attempted to adduce some initial evidence for the crosslinguistic influence of topic at intrasentential, intersentential and paragraph levels in the written production of Cantonese learners and users of English. The importance of investigating the SLA tendencies of all dialectal groups of Chinese learners of English cannot be overstated. Chinese people constitute more than a quarter of the world's population, and the very strong interest they show in learning English as a first foreign language means that key issues need to be resolved urgently to facilitate effective teaching and learning. Language typology and the effects of its transfer on written English may be one of these key issues.

Acknowledgements

My thanks are due to Barbara Chan of the Institute of Language in Education for responding so patiently to my questions on Chinese linguistics and for supplying the characters in the language examples, and to Lily Leung of the University of Hong Kong, Language Centre for her detailed and very constructive comments on the first draft of the paper. Any omissions, incorrect inclusions or misconceptions remain, of course, entirely my own responsibility.

NOTES

1. By "discourse accent" I refer to characteristically non-native patterns of discourse organisation; for a more comprehensive account, see Scarcella (1983).

REFERENCES

Allan, D. 1985. *Oxford Placement Test Parts 3B1 and 3B2*. Oxford University Press.

Barry, R. 1975. 'Topic in Grossman'. In R. E. et. al. (eds.) *Chinese: An Overlap of Meaning, Grammar and Discourse Function*. Papers from the Parasession on Functionalism, pp. 1-9, Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society.

Bond, M. H. 1986. *The Psychology of the Chinese People*, pp. 84-87, Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.

Gass, S. and Selinker, L. (eds.) 1983. *Language Transfer in Language Learning*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Gundel, J. and Tarone, E. 1983. In Gass and Selinker (eds.) *Language Transfer and the Acquisition of Pronominal Anaphora*, pp. 281-297.

Halliday, M. A. K. 1985. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.

Hawkins, J. 1980. 'On the theoretical significance of English/German syntactic contrasts'. Paper presented at the International Seminar on Contrastive English/German Grammar. California: Stanford University.

Jordens, P. and Kellerman, E. 1981. 'Investigation into the Transfer Strategy in Second Language Learning'. In Savard, J. and Laforge, L. (eds.) 1981, *Actes du 5e Congres de l'AILA*, pp. 195-215, Quebec: Les Presses de l'Universite de Laval.

Kaplan, R. B. 1966. Cultural Thought Patterns in Intercultural Education. *Language Learning* 16: 1-20.

Leung, W. K. 1987. 'How can the Monitor Monitor? The Contrastive Hypothesis Revisited'. In Bickley, V. C. (ed.) *Languages in Education in a Bi-Lingual or Multilingual Setting*. 1987. pp. 99-107, Education Department Publication: Hong Kong Government Printer.

Li, C. and Thompson, S. 1976. 'Subject and Topic: A New Typology of Language'. In Li, C. (ed.) 1976. *Subject and Topic*. New York: Academic Press.

Malcolm, I. and Hongjio, P. 1988. 'Argumentation Patterns in Contemporary Chinese: Implications for English Teaching'. In Bickley, V. C. (ed.) *Language Teaching and Learning Styles Within and Across Cultures*. 1989. pp. 321-333, Education Department Publication: Hong Kong government Printer.

Meisel, J. M. 1981. 'The Role of Transfer as a Strategy of Natural Second Language Acquisition/Processing'. Paper presented at the first Eunam Workshop on Crosslinguistic Second Language Acquisition Research, Lake Arrowhead.

Mohan, B. A. and Lo, W. A. 1985. 'Academic writing and Chinese Students: Transfer and Developmental Factors'. *TESOL Quarterly* 19/3: 515-534.

Odlin, T. 1989. *Language Transfer*. pp. 48-70, Cambridge University Press.

Rutherford, W. E. 1983. In Gass and Selinker (eds.) *Language Typology and Language Transfer*, pp. 358-70.

Scarcella, R. C. 1983. In Gass and Selinker (eds.) *Discourse Accent in Second Language Performance*. pp. 306-326.

Sung, W. M. (forthcoming 1991). 'Typological Transfer: A Factor in the Learner Language of Hong Kong Students?' In Green, C. F. and Bunton, D. (eds.) *English Usage in Hong Kong. Institute of Language in Education Journal Special Issue No.2*. Education Department Publication: Hong Kong Government Printer.

Thompson, S. 1978. 'Modern English from a typological point of view: Some implications of the function of word order'. *Linguistische Berichte* 54: 19-35.

Trevise, A. 1986. 'Is it Transferable-Topicalisation?' In Kellerman, E. and Sharwood-Smith, M. (eds) 1986. *Crosslinguistic Influences in Second Language Acquisition*. pp. 186-206, Pergamon.

Wong, S. L. 1988. 'What we do and don't know about Chinese learners of English: A Critical Review of Selected Research'. *RELC Journal* 19/1: 16-36.

Zhou Z. P. and Feng, W. C. 1983. 'Comparison between Chinese and English Passive Sentences and Discussion on Methods of Translation'. *Language Learning and Communication* 2/3: 309-321.

HONGKONG PAPERS IN LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE TEACHING 14 (1991) ISSN 1015-2059

AN EVALUATION STUDY OF A PROGRAMME TO TEACH STANDARD REPORT WRITING

Peggy Leung
Hong Kong Polytechnic

1. Introduction

Until the 1980s, evaluation was a relatively neglected area in the field of language teaching. Mackay suggests a reason for the apparent lack of evaluation studies:

> "What may have contributed to the timidity regarding program evaluation were the great comparative studies carried out in the U.S.A. and U.K. to compare the effectiveness of different approaches to the teaching of ESL....The manifest lack of success of these studies in determining the relative effectiveness of the outcomes of different programs appears to have had the effect of convincing applied linguists that they should stay clear of such complicated and difficult-to-control activities."
>
> (Mackay, 1981: 91)

However, in recent years, the importance of evaluation has been gradually acknowledged. Candlin, Kirkwood and Moore (1978) already include 'evaluation of students' and 'evaluation of course' in their model of course design. Stern (1984) includes evaluation as one of the 'curriculum processes'. Breen makes it the last level of his 'Process Syllabus', claiming that "on-going evaluation of the teaching-learning process in the classroom would be a crucial activity..." (Breen, 1984: 58). Allen states that curriculum decision-making "must be subject to some form of evaluation, in order to check that the results of our decisions are meeting their stated objectives, and so that knowledge about curriculum processes can accumulate in a systematic and responsible way" (Allen, 1984: 70). Nunan considers evaluation to be "a necessary component in any curriculum plan" and "particularly important in a needs-based, learner-centred program which is directed towards the achievement of specific goals and objectives" (Nunan, 1984: 46). Brown argues that "evaluation should be the part of a curriculum that includes, connects and gives meaning to all of the other elements in a program" (Brown, 1989: 241). Elley stresses the important role of evaluation in education, stating that "if the quality of our educational programmes is to be enhanced, and we are to avoid following the misleading bandwagons of the past, it (evaluation) is an essential part of the enterprise of education" (Elley, 1989: 285).

A lot of evaluation studies, especially the earlier ones, tend to be quantitative. This has aroused the concern of some practitioners in the field of language teaching. Lawton (1978) attributes the failure of past attempts to evaluate curriculum partly to the existence of an educational research climate that rewards accuracy of measurement and generality of theory. Paulston (1980) also argues that the quantitative paradigm, with its emphasis on objective, 'hard' and replicable data, is not sufficient by itself and needs to be supplemented by a more qualitative approach which would be process- rather than outcome-oriented. Other researchers would contend that quantitative and qualitative evaluation can co-exist. As Allen points out, it would be a mistake to think in terms of two clear-cut schools of curriculum evaluation:

> "I am basically in sympathy with the belief that quantitative and qualitative research methods are not mutually exclusive, and that they throw useful light on one another when they are used in the same study."
>
> (Allen,1984: 73)

The instruments used for evaluation need not therefore be confined to pre- and post-tests. Questionnaires, interviews and classroom observation can be employed to complement purely quantitative measures, though pre- and post-tests "should be an essential part of evaluation of all courses" (McGinley, 1983: 91). The approach to curriculum evaluation thus moves from a purely product-oriented one to one that includes processes. Different stages of a curriculum are looked into. Such a shift from a product-oriented approach to a process-oriented one has been obvious in recent years. Various models have been developed to evaluate the different stages of a curriculum. Mackay (1981) proposes one which involves thirteen categories. This is a process-oriented approach which "avoids the pitfall into which evaluation studies frequently fall, namely, to focus exclusively on student product" (Mackay,1981:110). McGinley (1983) proposes a package which bears certain similarities to Mackay's paradigm but on a reduced scale. It involves the use of various kinds of evaluative instruments. The Phi Delta Kappa National Study Committee on Evaluation develops the CIPP (acronym for Context-Input-Process-Product) evaluation model which places equal emphasis on process and product. Breen (1989) also devises an evaluation cycle for the different phases of language learning tasks -- task-as-workplan, task-in-process and task outcomes -- and this model is evidently process-oriented.

A model which enables us to evaluate the different levels of a programme is proposed by Johnson who points out that "Knowledge of products and in particular global products such as scores on proficiency tests, has limited value for decision-making unless evaluators know the learning processes by which the outcomes were achieved' (Johnson, 1989: 21). The four levels in Johnson's model are curriculum planning, ends/means specification, programme implementation and classroom implementation. The first level, curriculum planning, "consists of all those decisions taken before the development and implementation of the programme begins" (Johnson, 1989: 2). It is the policy-making level and determines the overall aims of the curriculum. The second level, ends/means specification, is "the process by which policy, and the means by which it is to be implemented, are operationally defined. Ends specifications should provide an exact characterisation of the target proficiency. Means specification should prescribe the method by which the target proficiency should be achieved" (Johnson, 1989: 4). This level is, in other words, concerned with syllabus writing -- ends specification relates to objectives, and means specification to method. The third level, programme implementation, relates to "the development of teaching and learning resources, and the preparation of teachers to ensure that the resources are used effectively" (Johnson, 1989: 7). The fourth level, classroom implementation, relates to teaching and learning acts in the classroom.

This paper will report on evaluation studies of two courses taught by the writer at the Hong Kong Polytechnic in 1989 (Fuller details of the methodology and results can be found in Leung (1990), unpublished M. Ed. dissertation). They were the Accountancy Year 1 (AC 1) and Company Secretaryship Year 1 (CS 1) English courses. The two sets of students followed the same English programme. Their ability level was comparable as both AC and CS courses were run by the Department of Accountancy and shared the same admission requirements. In fact, in 1990, the CS course was phased out and the Year 1 CS students, some of whom were subjects of this study, became Accountancy students when they were promoted to Year 2. Students on the course were taught how to write management reports of different formats - letter reports, memo reports, etc.; my research focused on standard report writing. The entire English programme was to be covered in 30 hours, of which 14 hours were devoted to standard report writing. The duration of the whole programme was 10 weeks, and standard report writing was taught in the last 5 weeks. A seminar mode of teaching was adopted but I tried out an alternative problem-solving approach in one AC group and one CS group with a view to stimulating the thinking of the students.

Before proceeding to the aim of my evaluation study, I would like to clarify the meanings of 'standard report writing' and 'problem-solving approach' since the former rarely appears in the literature of report writing and the latter is open to many interpretations, but refers here to a methodology which was tried out at the level of classroom implementation.

1.1 Standard Report Writing

The familiar terms, long and short reports, seem to me to be a little confusing as "length is a relative term, and no specific page length can be agreed on as the breaking point between long and short reports" (Lewis and Baker, 1983: 203). Moreover, "short reports written in the traditional format tend to have more of the characteristics of long reports" (Lewis and Baker, 1983: 205). Some short reports "may run up to ten pages" (Brown, 1973: 42), or even "thirty pages" (Lewis and Baker, 1983: 203). Thus, I decide to use the term 'standard report' instead to refer to the format of 'introduction - findings - conclusions - recommendations.'

1.2 Problem-Solving Approach

The term is often interpreted in different senses. In some literature, it takes on a relatively informal sense, while in others it is defined much more technically with explicitly stated strategies. "Some people define all thinking as problem-solving" (Brown, 1973). Fisher (1987) defines problem-solving as 'higher order' thinking, calling for skills such as inference, deduction, analysis and evaluation. According to Fisher, problem-solving involves both the critical and creative aspects of thinking. "The critical or analytical approach involves seeing the different parts of a problem and the ways in which they are related...the creative side is concerned with how to generate a variety of possible solutions, and the ways in which the problem might be tackled" (Fisher, 1987: 11). Treece (1985) lists various steps of problem solving including determining and defining the problem, collecting data, organizing data, evaluating and interpreting data and selecting a solution. Margerison (1974) gives a condensed version of these steps which he calls the PSA cycle: Problem diagnosis - solution development - action implementation.

In two of my four groups, I tried out a problem-solving approach as a special methodology that gave prominence to some major activities and techniques. Brainstorming is one such technique that is often employed to increase the flow of ideas. The technique of questioning is important in the discussion stage (Fisher, 1987) and the skill of negotiating with others in groups is essential to the success of the problem-solving approach (Margerison, 1974). While implementing the problem-solving approach the teacher needs to be "gaining and keeping the pupils' attention, controlling the group, sticking to the point, and ensuring balanced participation" (Fisher, 1987: 37). It is also useful to get the students to report back to the class and share findings with other groups.

2. Aims of Study

The principal aim was to evaluate the effectiveness of the two English courses mentioned above. A further goal was to compare two forms of classroom implementation. A dual approach -- quantitative and product-oriented studies together with qualitative and process-oriented methods -- was employed. The students' pre- and post-teaching reports were compared. The coherence of each course was looked into by adopting Johnson's model of the four levels of evaluation described above. I hoped that my evaluation study would yield useful insights into the course design and teaching of standard report writing at tertiary level.

3. Methods

3.1 Subjects

Four groups of students helped me with my study -- the AC 1 special methodology group (ACm), AC 1 normal teaching group (ACn), CS 1 special methodology group (CSm) and CS 1 normal teaching group (CSn). ACm and ACn each consisted of 15 students. CSm consisted of 19 and CSn 20. While special methodology refers to the problem-solving approach, normal teaching means the seminar mode.

3.2 Procedure

Information was gathered by means of pre- and post-tests, a questionnaire, interviews and classroom observation.

3.2.1 *Pre- and Post-Tests*

A pre-test was administered before the teaching of the standard report writing component, and a post-test at the end of the course. The tests were mainly concerned with the ends level (Johnson, 1989) and with the learning outcome of the students. In each test, the students were required to write a standard report within a time limit of 90 minutes. A test checklist based on the objectives of the course and to be completed by the teacher was devised to help determine the achievement of the objectives for standard report writing.

A two-sample T-test was used to compare the mean improvement between ACm and ACn, and between CSm and CSn. The hypothesis was that the special methodology groups would make greater progress than the normal teaching groups. The mean improvement of ACm and CSm was also compared to find out if students of the two methodological groups made the same degree of progress. The expectation was that their degree of progress would be similar despite possible differences at their starting level.

3.2.2 *Questionnaire*

A questionnaire was administered at the end of the course to solicit the students' attitudes towards the standard report writing component of the course. The special methodology groups were requested to give their opinions of the problem-solving approach.

3.2.3 *Interviews*

Guided interviews were conducted with the course coordinator of the parent department and with two students of the special methodology groups. Specific questions were prepared and asked in a fixed order.

3.2.4 *Classroom Observation*

Two lessons adopting the problem-solving approach (one ACm and the other CSm) were observed by a research assistant. Both lessons were conducted by the author and were on the same topic, using the same materials. An observation record form which provided an outline of what to observe was used by the observer.

4. Results

4.1 Pre- and Post-Tests

The post-test results showed that on the whole, the objectives of standard report writing were well achieved by all four groups. Scores on most areas were above 60%. Students achieved the best post-test results, with scores of over 80%, in the following areas:

- Purpose of report
- Selection of data
- Grouping and sequencing of data
- Precision with figures in describing data
- Noting attitudes, expressing personal opinions and supporting opinions with data
- Proposing immediate courses of action
- Actions related to purpose and conclusions
- Overall organization

The following were the most problematic areas, with scores of below 30%, in the post-test:

- When information was collected
- Using sub-headings
- Stating source and numbering of graphic aids
- Highlighting salient features in graphic aids
- Expressing different degrees of certainty

Students made marked improvement (increments of approximately 40%) in the following areas:

- Stating time in background information
- Terms of reference
- Use of instrument in gathering information
- Use of headings
- Selection, construction, captioning and labelling of graphic aids
- Noting relationship
- Summarizing findings
- Numbering conclusions
- Making recommendations
- Overall organization

Scores in both pre-test and post-test were poor, showing gains of only about 10%:

- When information was collected
- Use of sub-headings
- Stating source of graphic aids
- Highlighting salient features in aids

The progress made by the special methodology group and the normal teaching group was compared to find out if differences at the classroom implementation level would affect the learning outcome of the students. Therefore the pre- and post-test scores obtained by the students of ACm were compared with those of Group ACn, and scores obtained by students of CSm were compared with CSn. I also compared the progress made by ACm and CSm and tried to find out if the starting levels of both groups were the same, and if not, whether different starting levels would affect the effectiveness of the problem-solving approach. The table below presents results for all subjects.

Table: Pre and Post-test results for all subjects in four groups

	ACm			ACn			CSm			CSn		
Sub	Pre	Post	Imp	Pre	Post	Imp	Pre	Post	Imp	Pre	Post	Imp
1	25	33	8	10	25	15	17	39	22	17	33	16
2	11	40	29	13	35	22	10	32	22	8	36	28
3	33	43	10	14	23	9	14	33	19	13	40	27
4	24	36	12	15	35	20	19	30	11	14	35	21
5	19	35	16	13	26	13	22	41	19	8	34	26
6	20	45	25	23	37	14	15	22	7	16	29	13
7	15	37	22	21	32	11	10	32	22	11	39	28
8	14	40	26	11	29	18	12	28	16	17	32	15
9	12	42	30	13	23	10	17	37	20	30	27	-3
10	13	37	24	19	24	5	19	40	21	17	33	16
11	10	28	18	13	28	15	8	40	32	17	40	23
12	26	40	14	11	22	11	11	18	7	15	24	9
13	18	40	22	16	34	18	11	39	28	20	30	10
14	27	37	10	16	20	4	16	47	31	13	33	20
15	7	30	23	16	28	12	23	45	22	14	15	1
16	/	/	/	/	/	/	16	40	24	21	32	11
17	/	/	/	/	/	/	12	46	34	14	29	15
18	/	/	/	/	/	/	16	49	33	15	30	15
19	/	/	/	/	/	/	24	35	11	11	30	19
20	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	15	29	14
mean imp	19.27			13.13			21.11			16.20		
S^2	52.21			26.27			67.88			69.43		

(Key: Sub = subject; Pre = Pre-test; Post = Post-test;
Imp = improvement)

All four groups made progress on the pre/post-test measure. Results of the two sample T-test confirmed that the special methodology groups made better progress than the normal teaching groups. It can be seen that the mean improvements of the two special methodology groups, ACm and CSm, were similar.

4.2 Questionnaire

In ACm, 13 questionnaires were returned out of 15 distributed; in ACn, 11 out of 15; in CSm, 16 out of 19 and in CSn, 18 out of 20. Below are the results of the questionnaire.

4.2.1 *Course content*

Responses from all four groups concerning 'usefulness' were highly positive. Most areas were rated useful or very useful. The best-rated areas were organization of data and discussing and interpreting findings. The least favourable areas, on which students felt too much time had been spent, were related to graphic representations.

The majority also wanted to see most areas maintained on the course. There was a substantial demand to extend the following:

- Discussing and interpreting findings
- Organisation of data
- Presenting judgements

The time spent on the standard report writing component of the course was rated just right by the majority of respondents.

When asked what other aspects of standard report writing should be taught, some put down 'layout' or 'format of presentation'. Some put down 'language' and 'jargon for report writing'.

4.2.2 *Course Materials*

The majority thought that just the right amount of materials was given on most areas but there were indications that further material in the following areas would be welcome:

- Discussing and interpreting findings
- Description of findings
- Organization of findings

When asked on what other aspects of standard report writing they wanted more handouts, many wrote 'None'. A few put down 'real examples of reports' and 'Standard report samples on different subject matters'. When asked how to improve the handouts, some put down 'Not enough practice work' or 'More exercises', or 'More examples should be set'.

Responses to usefulness of handouts were highly positive. The area which was rated least useful was highlighting salient features in graphic aids.

Responses to the recommended reference books were least positive among all items in the questionnaire. Many left this section blank and a few even stated that they could not get hold of the books.

4.2.3 *Course Methodology*

Responses to the problem-solving approach from both ACm and CSm were favourable. Students found problem-solving strategies useful. More than 90% of ACm and almost 70% of CSm found that they were able to raise a lot of questions in their discussions. 85% of ACm and 75% of CSm found brainstorming a useful technique for generating ideas. Over 80% in both groups agreed that there was active exchange of ideas. All in ACm and 75% of CSm felt that they could generate solutions. They had a sense of achievement when solutions were generated. 85% of ACm and 70% of CSm did not give up even when they encountered difficulties.

Regarding the advantages of the approach, the majority of both ACm and CSm noted that they could learn through active participation. 85% of ACm and over 90% of CSm found that the approach made possible more student involvement. However, they were rather divided on whether participation was balanced in their discussions. About half in each group thought that participation was balanced but the other half thought that discussion was often dominated by one or two active members of the group. The use of a chairperson to regulate participation in group discussion was found to be effective by CSm (86% being positive about appointing a chairperson) but 30% of ACm had some reservations.

Students agreed that they learnt through sharing with peers. All in ACm and over 90% of CSm thought they benefited from sharing. The students also found reporting back useful.

About 80% of ACm and 90% of CSm found a lot of interaction among group members. Almost 90% of CSm and all in ACm found more teacher-student interaction here than the usual seminar mode. Consultation with teacher was considered useful by all in ACm and almost 80% of CSm. Students also found that they could learn in a more relaxed atmosphere under the problem-solving approach. Almost all in both ACm and CSm enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere of learning.

The students also found the approach educationally useful. 85% of ACm and all in CSm thought that the approach could stimulate their thinking. In each group, over 80% thought that their faculty for critical thinking could be developed, and over 85% found the strategies helped their studies in general.

In their responses to the open-ended question concerning the application of the approach to report writing, most were positive about its value. When asked which area/areas of standard report writing they considered to be best taught through the approach, answers on almost all areas were received. Some put down 'All'. Most put down interpretation of findings, conclusions and recommendations. When asked which area/areas should not be taught through the approach, most wrote 'None'. A few put down 'Introduction'.

4.3 Interviews

Both course co-ordinator and students perceived the need to include report writing in the English course. They also found the objectives highly relevant.

For some objectives, the students had much previous knowledge. However, they found it helpful to consolidate their knowledge in this course. The teaching of use of graphic aids, in their opinions, should be the job of the parent department. They also thought that formal learning of report writing in the classroom was necessary.

Regarding course structure, both co-ordinator and students thought that standard report writing was rightly placed at the end of the English course, after note-taking and summarizing skills, and after relatively simple report formats like letter and memo reports. They also thought that ten weeks was the right duration for the course, and that three lessons per week was not at all intensive.

The handouts were found to be useful and sufficient on the whole. However, some areas were hardly touched on, e.g. highlighting salient features in graphic aids. Students were not totally satisfied with the design of some exercises which were too mechanical. They would like to see all five units developed on a central theme.

The students welcomed the problem-solving approach but they wanted to tackle real problems instead of doing artificial problem-solving exercises set in handouts.

As far as learning is concerned, the course co-ordinator found that the students of both courses had improved their skills in standard report writing on the whole. Their strongest area was selection of data and overall organization. Progress relating to language accuracy was also obvious. However, he still thought that some were unable to draw sound conclusions, and they also needed to be more audience-oriented in their writing.

The students thought that they learnt a great deal about the overall organization of a report, what to include in each section, how to write convincing conclusions, etc. Former Arts students benefited more in analysis of data than former Science students. The students would also like to write 'bigger reports' at the end of the course instead of one within a time limit of 90 minutes.

4.4 Classroom Observation

The time spent on various stages of the lesson was similar in both ACm and CSm lessons.

In group discussion, students in CSm seemed to have more balanced participation. Many questions were raised and ideas generated. Members did not accept possible solutions readily; instead they tried to evaluate solutions and explore possibilities. The chairperson gave each member opportunities to express himself. The members were also able to apply certain strategies when they encountered problems -- seeking help from the teacher, consulting reference books, etc. On the whole, they were actively involved in their discussions.

In ACm, discussion tended to be dominated by two active members of the groups. The chairperson did not even give each member the opportunity to voice his opinions, nor did he attempt to sum up the ideas of the group. Viewpoints were sometimes given without elaboration. Nevertheless many questions were raised and ideas generated.

Students of both ACm and CSm appeared to be quite independent in their discussion. They only sought help from the teacher occasionally. The teacher moved from group to group and offered help when she detected difficulties arising.

Owing to time constraints, each group could not report back their discussion to the class thoroughly. Most groups just gave the answers to each exercise. Moreover, there was a great deal of overlapping when each group reported back on all the tasks they had completed. Generally speaking, the students seemed to find reporting back useful.

Also because of limited time, the teacher could not give thorough feedback. She went over the answers of each exercise with the class and briefly commented on the differences of opinions. The teacher finally summed up the main points of the lesson.

5. Discussion

5.1 Pre- and Post-tests

The fact that the vast majority of the objectives were well-achieved demonstrates that the course was generally effective. Of the objectives achieved, most were due to teaching although for some, such as noting attitudes, grouping and sequencing of data, the students had much previous knowledge from secondary schooling. Of the four sections of a standard report, the objectives pertaining to recommendations were best achieved and the importance of this phase in a report appears to be widely recognized by students. Marked improvement was seen in the overall organization of their reports. In the pre-test, many of their reports contained just one section: discussion of findings. After the course, they learnt to present their ideas more systematically by dividing their reports into different sections and using appropriate headings for each section.

Of the objectives that were not satisfactorily achieved, most were completely neglected by the students in the pre-test. However, their awareness of these objectives was not enhanced through teaching. Areas relating to graphic aids formed the majority of these poorly achieved objectives. The students were unable to select appropriate graphic aids to represent data visually; they were still rather ignorant of the rules for constructing these graphics, particularly pie charts. They still failed to give captions and sources of the aids and number them. In their discussion of these aids, they also failed to highlight salient features. Re-teaching of the poorly-achieved objectives was necessary, and re-examination of the materials used and time spent on such areas would be helpful.

The result of the two-sample T-test also shows that differences at classroom implementation level affect the learning outcome of the students. Coherence of the first three levels, in my opinion, may not bring about the desired results if they are not echoed by the last level of the decision-making framework.

The results also indicate that the problem-solving approach may be a more effective methodology for teaching standard report writing than the seminar mode. Problem-solving strategies like questioning, brainstorming and evaluating solutions are likely to stimulate more active thinking on the part of the students.

The fact that there is no significant difference between the progress of ACm and CSm confirms my belief that the problem-solving approach works despite differences in the starting levels of the students. ACm students proved to have more previous knowledge of standard report writing than CSm students, as reflected by their pre-test scores. However, both these groups made more or less the same degree of progress on the course.

5.2 Questionnaire

The positive ratings on course content and methodology show that the course was generally well-received. Most of the course content was found to be useful. The least favourable areas were those relating to graphic aids, which received low ratings on usefulness and suggestions that they be cut back. 'Methods and source of information' was another area which received a significant demand for curtailment. The reason is, I think, different from that for graphic aids as reflected by ratings on usefulness. The students found this area useful but they wanted to have it cut down, probably because it was too simple and straightforward to be worth the amount of time spent on it.

The result also shows that the present allocation of time to the standard report writing component (14 hours out of 30 hours) should be maintained. As for other areas which should be added to this component, the students' view of including more work specifically on points of language should be taken into consideration. In fact, language was taught throughout the course although it was not a specific objective of this component. Given more time, language could also be included in the syllabus. Besides language, they also put down 'layout' or 'format'. I interpret this as referring to the prefatory and appended parts and the physical presentation of the report. Again, these areas could be addressed if more time was given.

The students found the handouts generally adequate and sufficient. Perhaps more examples of reports ought to be included in the handouts as requested by some students. They also indicated that measures should be taken to ensure easy access to the recommended reference books.

Responses from both ACm and CSm to the problem-solving approach were highly favourable but the results show that ACm students seemed to be able to exploit the problem-solving strategies better. The majority also understood the advantages of the approach. However, something should be done to ensure more balanced participation in group discussions. In fact, anticipating problems in this area, I appointed a chairperson to regulate participation. The different responses to this tactic from ACm and CSm, in my opinion, show that its effectiveness depends on the personality and capability of the chairperson.

5.3 Interviews

The existence of the course was well justified as both course co-ordinator and students recognized the need to teach accountancy students standard report writing. Accountants need to verify their inspection of a firm's financial records in the form of a report. They need to interpret and present information linguistically. The students also thought that mastery of the report writing skills was more effective through formal learning than through reading references. The course was also coherent at ends-means specification level as the objectives were considered to be highly relevant and the course structure appropriate by both course co-ordinator and student. The students' opinion that the parent department should teach the use of graphic aids is, I think, justifiable since it is not primarily a question of language. The present course structure of three lessons a week spreading over ten weeks helped to establish better teacher-student rapport than a course, spreading over thirty weeks, with only one lesson per week.

The interviews reflect that the handouts ought to be slightly revised as some exercises like sentence transformations were too mechanical. A thematic approach to the five units of the handouts (overall organization, introduction, findings, conclusions and recommendations) would be desirable.

The interviews also reveal a shortcoming of the problem-solving approach implemented in this programme, as students were simply asked to deal with artificial problem-solving situations set in the handouts.

The students' preference for writing 'bigger reports' instead of one completed within ninety minutes should be given serious thought. 'Bigger reports' are likely to be more challenging to the students and perceived as more authentic.

5.4 Classroom Observation

The teacher's explanation of the lesson objectives helped to make the students' learning more purposeful, as the students could be more aware of what they were expected to achieve in the lesson. Clear instructions for the completion of the various tasks were also useful.

The students obviously benefited a great deal from the problem-solving approach. Both the critical and creative aspects of their thinking could be stimulated. They were able to pool together ideas and critique them, generate solutions to problems, evaluate solutions and explore alternatives.

6. Conclusions

The standard report writing component of the course was found to be effective and coherent on the whole.

6.1 Course Effectiveness

The vast majority of the objectives were well achieved with the exception of those relating to graphic aids. Re-teaching of these poorly-achieved objectives was definitely necessary.

The effectiveness of the course was also reflected by the students' progress. A comparison between the pre and post-test shows that the students had benefited from the course. The two-sample T-test also shows that the special methodology groups had made better progress than the normal teaching groups, while the two special methodology groups did not show much difference between their progress. Hence, I can conclude that differences at classroom implementation level do affect the learning outcomes of the students, and that the problem-solving approach may be an appropriate methodology to teach standard report writing. The problem-solving approach works equally well for students with different starting levels.

6.2 Coherence

The standard report writing component of the AC and CS course demonstrated a high degree of coherence, despite a slight mismatch at certain points of the decision-making framework (Johnson, 1989).

The policy decision at curriculum planning level to include standard report writing in this course is correct, as it caters to the needs of society. The social needs for report writing are obvious, and increasing in today's business world as an effective means of communication. The inclusion of report writing in this course also caters to the needs of the students who followed the old Use of English syllabus in the Matriculation course. They had very little, if any, previous knowledge in report writing.

The objectives of the standard report writing component were also clearly spelt out and found to be useful. They were well achieved by the students of both AC and CS courses. The course content was received favourably. The course structure was also found to be an appropriate means to achieve the ends. So there was coherence within the ends/means specification level.

Coherence between the curriculum planning level and ends/means specifications level was to a large extent achieved as the social needs were spelt out clearly at the ends level, and the course structure was able to achieve the ends and meet the needs specified at the planning level. However, the needs of society and students would be best answered if the syllabus could be rewritten to include real problems and the course structure modified so as to allow the students more time to tackle these problems.

Regarding programme implementation, the materials used on the course were found to be largely relevant to the objectives. Only a few relating to graphic aids were neglected. However, some exercises were not intellectually challenging enough for tertiary students. Hence, there was some mismatch between this level and the curriculum planning level as policy makers intend the course to produce students who could think critically.

At classroom implementation level, the problem-solving approach was found to be an appropriate approach for teaching report writing. It was also consistent with course specifications at the curriculum planning level as it catered to the society's demand for people who could think and tackle problems. The students could apply the problem-solving strategies to daily-life situations. Coherence was also achieved between ends/means specification and classroom implementation to a large extent. The explanation of the lesson objectives at the beginning of the lesson served to establish a link between the two levels. The content taught in each lesson was closely related to the course objectives.

Only slight mismatch was detected between classroom implementation and programme implementation level. The teachers were not guided on how to use the materials. Lesson plans were not given to promote uniformity at classroom implementation level.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Recommendations for Standard Report Writing Programmes

To design an effective standard report writing programme, I think the first consideration is to respond to the needs of society and of students. As society is constantly undergoing changes, its needs are also changing all the time. Besides, the students' needs are constantly changing too. Students entering Hong Kong tertiary institutions before the academic year 1988/89 may have had a greater need to learn how to write reports. However, with the implementation in 1989 of a new Use of English syllabus which includes practical skills like memo and report writing, students may have less need to learn report writing. Thus I suggest that the needs of society and students should be constantly reviewed.

To make report writing more purposeful, I recommend that an industrial placement be incorporated into a standard report writing programme during which they can have an opportunity to identify real problems in their working environment, carry out primary research and collect relevant data. Such an arrangement would allow for more thorough application of the problem-solving strategies and be likely to offer more challenges to the students.

To ensure that the materials contribute to the achievement of the objectives, the syllabus writer should help to develop the materials. He need not be the only person responsible for materials development. In fact, a team can be formed to develop, review and revise the materials. To help the teachers exploit the materials effectively, tutors' notes would be helpful.

At classroom implementation level, I would recommend approaches which are likely to stimulate active thinking, generate more student involvement, encourage sharing of ideas and more interaction with peers and teacher. The problem-solving approach is one such approach, and I think it is particularly useful for teaching such areas in report writing as interpretation of data, drawing conclusions and making recommendations.

7.2 Recommendations for Other Evaluation Studies

For future evaluation studies, I would recommend that a detailed checklist be devised for classroom observation. In fact, observation checklists are often used in evaluation studies but in my own study I deliberately experimented with a classroom observation form which outlined the different stages of a lesson. I expected such an observation record form to be able to provide the observer with more flexibility in writing their comments. However, this may only be useful to an experienced observer; it is not likely to be of great help to an inexperienced one such as the observer of my lessons, who is a research assistant. Even with an experienced observer, prejudice may come in when such a brief observation form is used. Thus, to ensure objectivity, I would prefer the use of a detailed checklist.

I have also found it useful to combine the product and process-oriented approach in course evaluation. We should not only be concerned with the final outcome of the course but also with every level of decision-making. Adopting a process-oriented approach, we can identify mismatches within each level and between the various levels, and then attempt to rectify them.

Finally, I would like to reiterate the importance of incorporating evaluation in any curriculum design. I am convinced that all courses should be evaluated, as fully as time and human resources permit, and I also hope more evaluation models will be proposed which make possible more valid evaluations.

Acknowledgement

I am most grateful to Dr. Desmond Allison, without whose guidance and help this paper would not have been possible.

REFERENCES

Allen, J.P.B. 1984 'General Purpose Language Teaching: A Variable Focus Approach'. In Brumfit, C.(ed.) *op.cit.*

Breen, M.P. 1984 'Process Syllabus for the Language Classroom'. In Brumfit, C. (ed.) *op.cit.*

Breen, M.P. 1989 'The Evaluation Cycle for Language Learning Tasks'. In Johnson, R.K. (ed.) *op.cit.*

Brown, J.D. 1989 'Language Program Evaluation: A Synthesis of Existing Possibilities'. In Johnson, R.K. (ed.) *op.cit.*

Brown, L. 1973 *Effective Business Report Writing*. Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Brumfit, C. (ed.) 1984 *ELT Documents: 118 General English Syllabus Design*. Pergamon.

Candlin, C., Kirkwood, J.M. & Moore, H.M. 1978 *Study Skills in English: Theoretical Issues and Practical Problems*. Pergamon.

Ejerhed, E. and Henrysson, I. (eds.) 1980 *Bilingualism*. Umea: University of Umea Press.

Elley, W.B. 1989 'Tailoring the Evaluation to Fit the Context'. In Johnson, R.K. (ed.) *op.cit.*

Fisher, R. 1987 *Problem Solving in Primary Schools*. Oxford, Blackwell.

Johnson, R.K. (ed.) 1989 *The Second Language Classroom*. Cambridge University Press.

Johnson, R.K. 1989 'A Decision-making Framework for the Coherent Language Curriculum'. In Johnson, R.K. (ed.) *op.cit.*

Lawton, D. 1978 *Curriculum Change in the Nineteenth and twentieth Centuries*. London, Hodder & Stoughton.

Leung, P. 1990 'An Evaluation of the Standard Report Writing Component of Two English Courses at the Hong Kong Polytechnic'. Unpublished M.Ed. dissertation, University of Hong Kong.

Lesikar, R. 1986 *Report Writing for Business*. Richard D. Irwin, Inc.

Lewis, P. & Baker, W. 1983 *Business Report Writing*. Grid Publishing, Inc.

Mackay, R. 1981 'Accountability in ESP Programs'. *ESP Journal* 1/2: 107-123.

Margerison, C.J. 1974 *Managerial Problem Solving*. McGraw-Hill.

McGinley, K. 1983 'Some Notes on Evaluation in ESP'. In James, G. (ed.) *The ESP Classroom -- Methodology, Materials, Expectations*. University of Exeter.

Nunan, D. 1984 *Learner-Centred Curriculum Innovation: A Case Study*. Australia: National Curriculum Resource Centre.

Paulston, C. 1980 'Recent Development in Research on Bilingual Education in the United States'. In Ejerhed, E. and Henrysson, I. (eds.) *op. cit.*

Stern, H.H. 1984 'Review and Discussion'. In Brumfit, C. (ed.) *op.cit.*

Treece, M. 1985 *Effective Reports*. Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

HONGKONG PAPERS IN LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE TEACHING 14 (1991) ISSN 1015-2059

PRIORITISING EQUALITY OF OUTCOME IN HONG KONG SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION

Nigel Bruce
University of Hong Kong

Introduction

In November 1990, the Hong Kong Government's Education Department released the 4th in its series of Education Reports (ECR4) prepared by specially-appointed Education Commissions. The ECR4, on Language Improvement Measures for Schools, is already notorious locally for its proposal that government and government-subsidised secondary schools adopt a language streaming policy, using results of an evaluative instrument at Primary 6 to decide which children would benefit from an English-medium secondary education, and which should continue with Chinese-medium education. This paper explores the implications of this recommendation from a tertiary perspective, and questions the extent to which the Commission has properly addressed the problem of equality of opportunity for children issuing from the Chinese-medium stream after 1994. The paper goes on to attribute the evolution of this policy to a widespread lack of understanding of the nature of second-language-medium academic education. This paper is short and at times polemical, but its main arguments have been carefully considered; fuller discussion of background issues can be found in Bruce (1990) and Lewkowicz (1990)[1].

The Problem: Educational Outcome or Process?

One of the driving motives behind the work of the Education Commission has been the desire to create a more equitable distribution of educational and vocational opportunities among Hong Kong's secondary school population -- a utilitarian desire for quality and equality. More specifically, the Commission has undertaken the unenviable task of attempting to enhance the quality of the 'means' or process of education for the majority of children, while preserving the quality and equality of the outcome or 'ends' of that process. Regrettably, in attempting to prescribe remedies for the primary and secondary school sectors, the Commission seemed constrained to 'respect the autonomy' of the tertiary institutions, to the extent that they have been forced to pursue justice under the kind of constraint that utterly confounded Shylock. In an educational system whose tertiary sector is predominantly English medium, linguistic and academic competence are as inextricable as flesh and blood; secondary and tertiary education cannot be segregated when making decisions relating to the development of those competences. It is not enough for the Commission to state (p.117) 'We understand that the Government intends to discuss with the tertiary institutions' those means by which equality of access to tertiary education can be assured.

Policies aimed at tackling shortcomings of both quality and equality will always risk producing the kind of volatile cocktail the Commission has come up with, especially if equality is made to trail behind prescriptions for improved quality. The consumer in Hong Kong is concerned with opportunity, and the freedom to pursue that opportunity for his or her child. The Education Department should have been able to predict the futility of a prescription which is directed at improving both quality and equality in secondary education but which is powerless to ensure equality of value of the product, in terms of access to the most profitable and prestigious career opportunities. In declaring that the majority of students 'would benefit more from their education if they were to learn in their mother tongue' (p.102), the Commission is unlikely to be referring to educational 'benefit' in terms that most parents or major employers would understand. The parent population and employment sectors in Hong Kong are not unique in tending to be concerned primarily with 'optimal proven outcomes' (qualifications testifying to superior ability) rather than the intrinsic quality of an education. In Hong Kong, there may well be a basic respect for any student's ability to persevere and triumph at the highest level in what is a foreign-language-medium system, but this is a respect not untinged by cynicism. Centralised curricula and examination systems all too easily develop into highly prescriptive and conservative vehicles for the promotion of conformity, acquiescence and emulation. Paradoxically, in seeking to guarantee fairness and reliability in their reward system, national examination syndicates are drawn into setting the kinds of examination which inevitably privilege norm over criterion referencing, with closed-ended questions breeding in students a belief in the rightness and wrongness of things, and in teachers a disposition to prescription. This not only militates against an intrinsically worthwhile education, but serves to encourage a hierarchical view of education and, in Hong Kong, largely determines access to and exclusion from an English-medium education. Since all tertiary institutions continue to be adamant in requiring certifiable proof of both academic and English competence from all candidates, parents need little assistance in making a 'rational and informed choice as to which medium would suit their children best' (p. 103). It is clear that equality at the end of the secondary 'tunnel' is what is perceived as paramount; despite the Commission's recognition of the 'need to ensure that students learning through Chinese ... are not disadvantaged' (p.116), an assurance of this equality is what continues to be glaringly absent in the recommendations of the Report.

Basis for a Solution

The easiest solution would be to continue the current free-for-all, which at least has the merit of leaving discrimination to market forces, that is, to the parents' ability to get their children into the right schools, and to the prevailing open access to academic achievement through the examination system. The majority fail to glean much profit from the experience, and are branded as relative failures, but which 'advanced' western education system is free from the same accusation? While the status quo may be a continuation of a colonial system, it does have the merit of being relatively 'democratically-driven'. Given the way the Report's recommendations continue to privilege English-medium schooling, while narrowing the majority of parents' and children's options from an early stage, it is easy to understand their largely hostile reception. My proposals below emanate from the belief that it is possible to achieve greater quality and equality both of the process of education and of career opportunities arising out of that education process.

Any such proposal requires a fundamental change of perspective. Since parents and the employment sector are concerned with outcomes, education needs to be looked at more honestly as being 'end-driven'. That is, the higher and further educational and vocational or professional opportunities - on which most parents have set their sights long before their children reach secondary school - must become the starting point in any analysis and review of the school curriculum. If equality is to be properly recognised as determinant of quality, then the system should be geared to providing equality of opportunity at the **exit** point of secondary education, rather than at the entry or any intermediate point. I shall argue that the heat being generated in debate over the appropriate duration of an English for Academic purposes bridging course is energy subjected to futile combustion.

Token Bridging or the Real Thing: Hobson's Choice

The Education Department (ED) has recommended providing an English bridging programme 'between May and the end of August' (p.117) at the end of Form 7 for all those Chinese-medium students who have been offered provisional acceptance by a tertiary institution. As a move to smooth the path of a linguistically-precocious elite, this could prove an effective as well as economical policy. However, if, as the ECR4 would pretend, the intention is to provide equal opportunity to the 70% of the secondary school intake likely to comprise the Chinese-medium stream, the Commission has clearly been ignoring the warnings of local English language educators and experts. Most tertiary language learning specialists have recommended a full academic year for the provision of an adequate bridging course for students whose only exposure to English would be in studying the language as another separate subject[2]. This advice has been offered *faute de mieux*, on the assumption that only the **form** of the post-'A' level bridging programme was negotiable; it did not issue from discussion as to whether such a programme was desirable in the first place. If provided as a 'posthumous' supplement to their curriculum, a whole-year bridging programme would put the Chinese-medium students a full year behind their English-medium counterparts. By dismissing this option out of hand, the Government has probably ensured that none of the bridging options will be taken up, and that a broader re-examination of policy options will have to take place. Would that their rationale were related in some way to the question of equality -- an objection, for instance, to arbitrarily shortening one group of children's earning life by a year; sadly, the rejection seems motivated rather by questions of finance and politics: the expense of an additional year for 70% of the secondary school population, and the fact that the proposal smacks of a tertiary Foundation Year being reintroduced through the back door. Its position once stated, the ED is clearly not for turning.

Out of this possible impasse may spring some hope for a more equitable bilingual education policy. It is clear to all concerned that equality of opportunity in the face of an English-medium tertiary sector and English-rewarding employment sector cannot be bought easily or cheaply. The optional solutions offered here require recognition of a principle that the Commission has already accepted in its rationale for Target-related assessment: that levels of academic (and linguistic) attainment are not rigidly tied to age or age groups. In both alternative 'bridging' proposals offered below, I advocate a system which is geared to ensuring that children exit from both English-medium and Chinese-medium schools with the same level of linguistic and academic preparedness, and therefore opportunity, and at the same age. This last point is crucial; educationists seem too ready to talk of additional years for bridging courses. Parents will perceive only the building of a further dimension of inequality into the educational system. This system at least currently offers their children open, albeit 'handicapped'[3], competition with each other right up to the final 'A' level hurdle.

Two Proposals

1. A 'Head-Start' Scheme

The ECR4 proposes assigning schoolchildren to English and Chinese-medium streams at the end of Primary 6, as part of the exercise of allocation to a secondary school. A scheme of target-related assessments is proposed, in English, Chinese and mathematics, to determine which children gain entry to an English-medium stream. The stigma of failure at this juncture cannot easily be attenuated by talk of what is educationally 'best' for a child. This alternative proposal advocates the delay of decisions on streaming to the end of secondary Form 2. Not only would this avert enormous psychological pressure being applied to children at a transitional point in their education, but it would fall at the juncture in the secondary curriculum when pupils, and their parents, are deciding on their 'O' level programme and orientation. As a result of target-related assessment at the end of Form 2, pupils allocated places in the English-medium stream should be put through a bridging year aimed at preparing them for a 2-year 'O' level curriculum in the exclusive medium of English. Pupils allocated to the Chinese-medium stream would commence immediately with their 'O' level studies in Secondary 3, following a path which would take them to the equivalent of 'O' level and 'A' or 'AS' level[4] one year ahead of the current schedule, giving them a 'head start' on the English-medium stream students.

By this system, Chinese-medium 'O' level graduates would have the option of continuing to 'A' level or leaving school to take up further education or full employment opportunities, while 'A' level graduates (one year ahead of their English-medium counterparts) would have the option of an academically and/or vocationally-oriented English-rich bridging programme, followed by entry into either tertiary education or the job marketplace. Since the Government has calculated that, by 1994-95, there will be first degree places in tertiary education for four out of five 'A' level matriculants, and given the proportion who will continue to seek tertiary education outside the territory, we can anticipate that the overwhelming demand would be for the academic route. The Chinese-medium 'O' level syllabus would ideally feature a) a strong English language component, and b) one examinable but non-critical subject in the medium of English, to provide students with minimal but essential exposure to English as a learning medium. As I suggest later, this could well be the ill-fated Liberal Studies 'AS' course. The post-'A' level 'bridging' programme would continue the development of students' conceptual and rhetorical skills, but in the medium of English. Any gaps in subject knowledge base resulting from the compression of the curriculum, and its gearing to the average student capability, could be made up in this bridging year. By this system, the offer of tertiary places would be based on 'A' and 'AS' level results. The offer to Chinese-stream matriculants would be conditional on their satisfying an English requirement at the end of the 'bridging' year -- currently grade 'D' on the Use of English exam.

The principle premise behind this proposal is that even the majority of the top 30% of the current crop of English-medium school matriculants entering university -- those destined for the estimated 30% place allocation to English-medium schooling in 1994 -- lack the necessary English and study skills to cope with an English-medium tertiary education in Hong Kong[5]. The proposed antidote is to use the year before the 'O' level syllabus commences (3rd year) to concentrate on the medium of study at the expense of new examinable content. This approach is based on the belief that not only can the system accommodate different rates of learning, but that the substantive (subject-based) agenda can vary across, for example, language streams, as long as it serves more transferrable and durable educational objectives, such as the development of analytical and critical thinking, and powers of argumentation and speculation.

A valid criticism of this proposal is that it would seem to ignore the high correlation between linguistic proficiency -- specifically English language proficiency -- and academic attainment. Children gaining entry to the English-medium stream are likely to be academically precocious; having them study the same subject matter one year behind their Chinese-medium counterparts might be interpreted as gross underexploitation of their learning potential. The alternative proposal offered below is a concession to this objection, but it is, in my opinion, the weaker option, constituting a concession to a traditional abhorrence of any retardation to the education of the 'gifted' child.

2. An Alternative 6th-Form Agenda

Students in both streams would follow the same curriculum, in parallel, as far as 'O' level, after which Chinese-medium stream students would only take 'AS' or 'H' levels, examinable at the end of Form 6. Tertiary places would be offered on the strength of those results -- provisional on the satisfactory completion of the same 'bridging' year as proposed above. There would still be a uniform entry point for tertiary education -- post-Form 7 -- with a bridging year for Chinese-stream students, offering preparation for either tertiary education or the business and technological professions.

While this option would require a more systematic effort to bring Chinese-medium students' knowledge base up to that of their English-medium counterparts, it does have the merit of operating with an established curriculum, that used by Chinese-medium schools preparing students for the Chinese University of Hong Kong. This close correspondence to the system currently practised by the Chinese University makes this alternative more practicable. It might, then, be considered premature that the one-year 'H' level is to be phased out in 1992 (H.K. Education Department, 1989), given that these qualifications are currently deemed satisfactory for entry to Scottish Universities (which also operate a 'Higher' certificate exam system), subject to proof of competence in English. This proposal appeals less to the principle of different learning rates or stages, but like the first proposal does subordinate curricular 'content' to what we have identified as more transferrable and durable educational objectives, the development of those intellectual and communicative powers without which content knowledge remains inert and undigested by the learner.

Implications for the Tertiary Sector

The University of Hong Kong has already informed the Government of its own diagnosis of the language in education problem, in its rationale for a Foundation Year (University of Hong Kong, 1988). Neither the English or Chinese-medium systems has been able to prepare students adequately for academic study. Now the Government has decided that the number of first degree places must be increased by 100% by 1997. The fact that it has also suggested that this can be done 'without sacrificing quality' (p.3) and, as recent indications from the UPGC make clear, by increasing the staff-student ratio, indicates a worrying lack of awareness of the nature and scale of the language problem in tertiary education (see Wong, 1984; So, 1988). The Commission's prescriptions for English include exhortations to the tertiary sector to 'do more to strengthen the current English improvement courses' (p. 117) for undergraduates; yet all the signs point to government funding of English training at tertiary level being cut back to a fraction of what was being promised a year ago.

The real danger in the Government's effectively minimising the responsibility of the tertiary institutions for tackling the English problem is that the tertiary sector will be encouraged to continue to live with an ill-defined second-language-medium identity. Where the secondary sector takes its references largely from within Hong Kong, its educational targets being effectively set by the Territory's own tertiary institutions, the tertiary sector is obliged to measure itself against the advanced first-language-medium tertiary systems of the United Kingdom, the United States and the Commonwealth. It does not require advanced arithmetic to discern the improbability of attempting, in a second language, to emulate the standards of those institutions within a 3-year degree programme, at a time when increasing numbers of 'first language' universities in the U.K. are opting for 4-year undergraduate programmes. As long as the curricula remain unashamedly content-based, and funds to develop English training -- the medium through which this content is mediated -- continue to be cut back, questions have to be asked about the quality of tertiary education being offered in Hong Kong. The tertiary institutions are equally guilty of being seduced by the veneer rather than the substance of students' intellectual endeavour. Recent attempts to introduce a Liberal Studies AS level subject into the 6th form curriculum, and have it accepted as a compulsory subject for university entry, have met with an unsympathetic reception from both University of Hong Kong and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology; neither is prepared to make it compulsory, and this effectively will discourage schools from offering the course, and students from taking it. [For a more optimistic prognosis, compare Falvey, this volume]. There remains some hope that, since the Liberal Studies syllabus aims to develop academic and intellectual skills, rather than teach a body of knowledge, its future might well lie in a tertiary bridging programme for Chinese-medium students after 1994.

Conclusion

There is an overwhelming case for an Education Commission to be established to conduct a wide-ranging examination of the provision of tertiary English-medium education in Hong Kong. Some of its likely brief should have fallen within the compass of this Commission, which should, for example, have distinguished between the learning needs and conditions characteristic of first-and second-language-medium education systems -- at both secondary and tertiary levels. The Commission's attempt to exclude consideration of the tertiary sector from practically all areas of its deliberations has resulted in one of the major weaknesses of the Report.

The evidence points to Chinese-medium matriculants becoming the victims of a parsimonious and almost casual Government policy towards the language problems they will be facing in tertiary education later in the 1990's. The use of the term 'remedial' as a hardy perennial to dismiss the claims of English to serious funding at tertiary level is indicative of the lack of understanding of the role of language in second-language-medium academic education. Unless there is radical re-thinking of this issue by the Government, the kinds of reforms being entertained in the Report -- and in my suggestions above -- will not make a significant contribution to the problem of student aptitude for English-medium tertiary education in Hong Kong.

NOTES

1. Bruce (1990) deals with some of the problems of running an L2-medium education system, with special reference to Hong Kong. Lewkowicz (1990) summarises the broader criticisms of the ECR4 report made by staff of the Language Centre of University of Hong Kong, and records the responses to those criticisms offered by a leading member of the Education Commission.

2. See Lewkowicz (1990), summarising HKU Language Centre's response to the 1989 'white paper' version of the Education Commission's 4th Report. Faculty of Education, University of Hong Kong, in its response to the final ECR4 (Crawford and Hui 1991) also describes the proposed three-month programme as 'totally inadequate' and, at a special colloquium held to debate options for a secondary-to-tertiary bridging programme (20/12/90 at the HK Convention Centre), secondary and tertiary English teachers voted almost unanimously in favour of a minimum one-year bridging course.

3. A major handicapping factor is the ability of the different schools to provide effective English-medium instruction, and the Commission has made a number of recommendations to remedy this problem.

4. Latest figures on Use of English grades of University of Hong Kong 1st-year entrants show that only 17.6% score A or B on that examination.

5. 'AS' levels are 'supplementary advanced' level courses, intended to be taken in a single academic year, much like the 'H' level which is soon to be phased out, and which corresponds closely to the Scottish 'Higher' level 6th-form course.

REFERENCES

Bruce, N. J. 1990. 'EL2-medium education in a largely monolingual society: The case of Hong Kong'. *Hongkong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching*, University of Hong Kong.

Crawford, N. & Hui, E. (eds.) 1991. *The Curriculum and Behaviour Problems in School: A Reponse to Education Commission Report No. 4*, Education Paper 11, Faculty of Education, University of Hong Kong.

Falvey, P. 1991. 'Curriculum Development in the Sixth Form: the Potential for Changes in Approaches to Writing Skills at Tertiary Level'. *Hongkong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching* 14: 89-96.

Hong Kong Education Department 1989. *Report of the Working Group on Sixth Form Education.* Hong Kong Government Printers, Hong Kong

Hong Kong Education Department 1990. *Education Commission Report No. 4: The Curriculum and Behavioural Problems in Schools.* Hong Kong Government Printer.

Lewkowicz, J. 1990. 'Language in education: Hard choices for Hong Kong'. *Hongkong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching*, University of Hong Kong.

So, D. W. C. 1988. 'Hong Kong bilingual education at the crossroads'. Paper presented at the 1st H.K. Conference on Language and Society, University of Hong Kong, April.

University of Hong Kong 1988. *The Case for a Foundation Year.* University of Hong Kong.

Wong, C. 1984. 'Sociocultural factors counteract the instructional efforts of teaching through English in Hong Kong'. University of Washington ms, cited in Fu, G. (1987) 'The Hong Kong bilingual', in Lord, R. & Cheng, H. (eds.) *Language Education in Hong Kong*, Chinese University Press, Hong Kong.

HONGKONG PAPERS IN LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE TEACHING 14 (1991) ISSN 1015-2059

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN THE SIXTH FORM: THE POTENTIAL FOR CHANGES IN APPROACHES TO WRITING SKILLS AT TERTIARY LEVEL

Peter Falvey
University of Hong Kong

Introduction

Hong Kong is currently undergoing a series of examination and curriculum innovations which could have far-reaching effects on the practice of teaching in upper secondary forms. In 1994 the new series of Advanced Supplementary (A/S) examinations will be introduced. These examinations, designed to provide a broader sixth form curriculum (Grade 12) than the existing narrow one, will be available in a wide range of subjects.

Two major innovations will be the introduction of Liberal Studies and Chinese Language and Culture. Liberal Studies has been introduced in order to broaden the outlook of Hong Kong students. The introduction of Chinese Language and Culture is intended to enable students to appreciate their cultural and linguistic heritage. It is eventually hoped that Liberal Studies, Chinese Language and Culture and the Use of English examinations will become compulsory subjects for all prospective entrants to tertiary education. The Use of English examination is already compulsory for University entrance.

Some view it as unfortunate that a successful rearguard action has been fought by the traditional 'hard' disciplines in the tertiary institutions - those with already overcrowded curricula (Medicine and Engineering). They have managed to convince the authorities to make Liberal Studies and Chinese Language and Culture optional, not compulsory, subjects. Undoubtedly, these attitudes will soften in the next few years.

In this paper the syllabus for the new A/S English Literature option will be considered. The curriculum innovations in this option and the changes in teacher practice which will result from those innovations may have beneficial results for the tertiary institutions which admit the students who take the option.

Composition Theory and Practice

The last decade has seen much discussion and a growing amount of research into the issue of how writers compose text. Early work by Emig (1971), responding to a call by Braddock, Lloyd-Jones and Schoer (1963) for research into L1 (First Language) writing processes and subsequent work by Perl (1978), Pianko (1979) and Faigley and Witte (1981, 1984) into the composing processes of first language writers revealed that writing is not linear, that it is recursive, and that substantial rewriting and revision takes place. Such pioneering work with first language writers was followed by research into the composing processes of second language writers by researchers such as Chelala (1981), Zamel (1982, 1983), Jones (1982, 1985), Raimes (1985), Brooks (1985), Rorchach (1986), and Martin-Betancourt (1986). Studies involving Chinese writers have been conducted by Lay (1982), Arndt (1987) and Friedlander (1990).

Some of the major findings of this research are that:

- lack of competence comes more from lack of composing competence than from lack of linguistic competence (Jones 1982, Zamel 1982, Raimes 1985)

- the composing processes of 'unskilled' L2 writers and 'unskilled' L1 writers are similar (Zamel 1983).

- competent L1 writers use common strategies.

Out of this research came changes in the theory and practice of composition teaching to first language writers and, subsequently, to second language writers. In first language writing one can trace the development of the 'process approach' over the past decade (see table below and subsequent text developed from Johns 1990: 25-31).

Table: Process Approaches

EXPRESSIVISTS		COGNITIVISTS
WRITER AS CREATOR	WRITER AS INTERACTANT	SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST VIEW

The 'Expressivists' were characterised by an approach which emphasised the power of the student as writer providing opportunities for the individual and uninhibited expression of honest and personal thought. Journal writing was a typical technique used in this approach which still has powerful adherents (Elbow 1973, 1981a, 1981b).

The 'Cognitivists' are characterised by an approach which treats writing as a problem solving activity. This approach has had a great effect on L2 research, theory and practice. It emphasises the importance of the concepts of THINKING and PROCESS.

'Writer as Creator' -- Flower (1989) and Hayes and Flower (1983) look at the writer as a creator -- one who plans extensively and 'defines the rhetorical problem'. Techniques used include group work in planning and writing, the creation of several drafts, and paper revision at the macro level (not merely 'polishing' text at the syntactic or morphological level but altering it in the areas of ideation, rhetoric and coherence).

Writer as Interactant -- Bakhtin (1973) stressed the need for the writer to interact with the audience. The notion that writing in English should be 'writer responsible' has now become part of current L2 writing theory and practice. 'Writer responsibility' can be defined as the acceptance by the writer that it is his/her responsibility for communicating with the reader; providing clear arguments, demonstrating opinions and their organization; and revealing the form of the text and the content in a manner accessible to the reader.

Social Constructionist View -- This view considers writing as a social act that can take place only within and for a specific context and audience. This approach stresses the importance of using the appropriate genre, knowing who the audience is, and writing for and within a 'discourse community'. This is the most recent trend within the cognitivist view of process in writing and is documented in the work on genre of Swales (1990), Dudley-Evans (1987), Martin (1985) and Berry(1989).

One can see within these developments the rationale for the theories and techniques in teaching L2 composition which have emerged in recent years:

- clear identification of the purpose for the communication
- writer responsibility towards the audience
- awareness of the genre to be used
- a well-signalled rhetorical framework
- an identified audience
- an acceptance of the notion of drafting and revising

It is believed, by advocates of the process approach that these, together with an acceptance of the role of the reader as a genuine source of feedback, help to provide the supportive framework within which students can learn to develop ideas coherently. This approach also reflects the world of academic and business writing where written drafts are created and discussed and rewritten regularly. (Given the above it is sad to see that the questions set in the most recent Composition Paper in the Hong Kong Use of English Examination (Summer 1991) eschew these trends and return to an audienceless, non-formatted, purposeless and artificial batch of questions which has caused concern among many of those involved in the teaching of writing, leading to a number of letters to the press.)

The A/S English Literature Syllabus – Description

The new English Literature A/S curriculum contains many features which distinguish it from traditional syllabuses in this subject. It conforms to the sixth form curriculum guidelines established by the Sixth Form Working Party on Curriculum Development in trying to expose students to a range of ideas in order to broaden their education. Three major curriculum developmental aims were adhered to:

- A full range of student needs should be taken into account - not merely intellectual ones. Social and communicative skills have to be developed so that students may become well-informed people who can enjoy and apply themselves to their future careers with confidence and ability.

- The curriculum and syllabus should be appealing and accessible to both Arts and Science students.

- The syllabus should discourage passive, memorised work and should encourage students to become actively involved in the learning process.

The syllabus does not attempt to provide a narrow focus for detailed literary study of a very few books. Instead it addresses the complementary media of print and film/video in order to expose students to a number of themes so that they can develop their own thinking and opinions rather than having to accept a canon of 'accepted' or 'received' opinion.

The A/S syllabus is divided into two major sections, Part I and Part II. Part II is sub-divided into two further sections:

Part I

Study of two texts and two films with a choice of one of the three following topics: Political and Social Issues, Detective Fiction, and Science Fiction (These three themes have been chosen for the initial curriculum. They will be changed regularly.)

Part II
Section A

A written diary covering a period of 4 months recording personal reactions, feelings, aspirations in relation to the theme chosen and what the candidate has been reading or viewing or doing.

Section B

A choice of one or two pieces of work out of a choice of three topics, which is/are based on a subject or theme relevant to the chosen topic in Part I.

What is novel for Hong Kong is that although Part I will be examined by written answers to written questions in the traditional manner, Part II consists of a portfolio of work divided into two sections: a diary and a project. This examination format means that there will have to be changes in teacher and student behaviour, changes which could well be beneficial to the tertiary institutions.

Changes to Teacher and Student Behaviour

This section of the paper outlines the changes to teacher and student behaviour which the new syllabus hopes to effect. Modern theories of composition described earlier will have their place in the techniques and strategies which will need to be developed by students and teachers as they deal with the changes inherent in the examination syllabus.

It is worth noting that there is currently a reaction to a wholehearted 'process approach', one which states that product must not be neglected at the expense of process (Davies 1989). However, the reader will note that the writer has taken an unashamedly optimistic approach to the introduction of the new syllabus in the rest of the paper. No apologies are made for this approach.

The section of the new syllabus which will have the greatest effect on teacher and student behaviour is Part II which encourages each student to respond in his/her own way to the theme that has been chosen. It also enables them to relate what they read, watch, encounter and perceive in the world around them to the theme that they are studying.

The fact that each student portfolio, composed of diary and project, will be an individual product means that it must of necessity be different from that of their peers. This has far-reaching implications for the learning styles of students and for the classroom organization and teaching/learning strategies employed by teachers of this subject.

In the first place students will NOT be able to receive a mass of notes which must be learned and regurgitated as classroom exercises and in the examination. Secondly, it will not be possible for students to borrow, plagiarise, or steal the work of students who have matriculated before them because the diary will be an individual record of reactions to contemporary events and how they relate to the theme being pursued. The record must be contemporary for the four months of record-keeping, although teachers will be encouraged to persuade students to keep a diary for a longer period of time than the four months stipulated in the regulations. (This, of course, has implications for the practice of writing.) In addition, students will be pursuing individual projects which will necessitate them working initially in groups and then alone under the SUPERVISION of their teacher, not as a whole group in one classroom.

For the teacher, a lock-step approach to the dissemination of 'knowledge' about the text will no longer suffice in Part II of the syllabus. Teachers will have to become counsellors, supervisors and facilitators who guide the students along their individual paths towards a greater understanding of the theme and its relation to the political/social world around them. Their new role will include the creation of appropriate learning and discovery tasks for students, tasks which will help to guide students to be able to think for themselves and to be analytical and critical. The new role will be perceived both as an exciting challenge and as a potential threat as teachers no longer become the repositories of an accepted canon of knowledge. They will have to become aware that students working on a project will eventually 'know' a lot more about the project than they do. It will be an opportunity for teachers to behave like readers in the non-school world -- when they approach texts, when they (the teachers) are non-knowers. This is quite different from their normal role where they often know what is right and what the students should be writing about even before the text is written.

Guidelines for teachers, being developed at the moment by the Curriculum Development Council/Hong Kong Examinations Authority joint working party, make it clear that students in the sixth form will not be classroom bound all the time during the periods devoted to this subject. Time will be made for them to work in the library on individual projects. They will be expected to carry over from the classroom an awareness of how the theme relates to all that they see, read and do. In addition, time will have to be spent on individual planning, research, drafting and the revision of ongoing work on the project. Teachers will need to become aware of new methods of classroom management in order to implement the new curriculum. Whole group teaching for much of the time will disappear.

These changes augur well for attitudes to learning and study when these students eventually arrive in their chosen institutions.

Implications of These Changes for Tertiary Institutions in Hong Kong

The implications of these changes to teaching and learning styles in the upper forms of those secondary schools in Hong Kong which decide to opt for the A/S level English Literature syllabus could be significant in terms of the quality of student thought and writing which occurs as a result of these developments.

It is possible that students will learn a number of new study skills. They will have to learn how to use the library efficiently, how to use references, how to skim and scan texts in a real situation and not merely in the section of the Use of English textbook used in the language classroom, how to relate what they are doing in class to the world around them, how to acquire new knowledge by fitting it into existing schema, and, most importantly of all:

- how to work on their own on tasks set by and agreed with their teachers

- how to develop their skills in thinking, planning, organising, selecting and learning.

These changes, which could be forced upon students by the most powerful agent for change in Hong Kong -- the examination syllabus -- will be an excellent precursor for the work that students will encounter in the tertiary institutions. Indeed, it may well have spin-off for teaching and learning within the institutions themselves as the expectations of the students are raised.

At the level of writing skills development, the new syllabus has the potential for improving student writing in keeping with the beliefs of a process approach to writing. The sheer amount of writing that students will be encouraged to do could benefit the quality of the writing although Krashen (1984) has sounded a cautionary note that quantity may not guarantee quality. Students will be encouraged to go through the natural 'processes' of writing which were described above. The advocates of a process approach would claim that with the opportunities for extensive planning and research, a macro-structure of the project will be created by the students under the supervision of the teacher. In addition, the potential for increased levels of coherence will be available as students become aware of how the macrostructure affects the 'texture' of the piece where coherence (overall unity of the text), cohesion (connectivity at the sentence and paragraph level), and thematisation (what follows on from the previous sentence) combine together to produce a well-developed, logical piece of writing, where there is every opportunity for thinking about the processes of revision and re-writing in order to improve earlier drafts.

It should be noted, however, that some notes of caution have recently emerged with writers commenting on some of the drawbacks of a fully-fledged process approach (e.g. Zamel (1987) and Moore (1987) quoted in Kelly (1989)).

As described above a major change will occur when the teachers read the diaries and project drafts of the students. These pieces of text will be real texts, not mere examination answers written for a faceless examiner. Teachers will have to act as genuine readers, learning about the ideas that the young writers are creating, developing, organising, connecting and explicating. This is an important point because the students will be in 'control' of their own diaries, not writing to a teacher-conceived task. In addition the teacher will not know what to expect. The teacher will thus much more resemble a reader coming fresh to a text. The teacher will, in effect, be a 'non-knower'.

Prescribed answers will no longer have a place in Part II of the new syllabus. This can be seen as a very welcome trend away from the 'model answers' which abound in Hong Kong's bookshops. The emphasis will be on the individual response of the students. The strategies described by researchers such as Elbow, Raimes, Faigley and Witte and all other adherents of process approaches will be evidenced as students plan, organize, develop ideas, draft and revise in Section B, and where they produce individual responses when they 'own' their own text in Section A.

A Final Cautionary Note

If readers feel that all the above sounds too good to be true, they may well be correct in terms of the numbers of prospective candidates who prepare for the option -- but not in the potential effect of the new curriculum on those students who do decide to opt for the English Literature A/S level.

Those who choose the new syllabus are unlikely to be disappointed, are likely to get a great deal of personal insight out of choosing the option, are likely to be better writers at the end of the process than those who do not have the opportunity to be exposed to the learning that will accompany the option, and will undoubtedly be better prepared for tertiary level studies than many of their peers.

REFERENCES

Arndt, V. 1987. 'Six writers in search of texts: A protocol based study of L1 and L2 writing'. *ELT Journal* 41: 257-267.

Bakhtin, M. M. 1973. *Marxism and the philosophy of Language*. (trans. Matjka, L. and Titunik, I. R.) New York: Seminar Press.

Berry, M. 1989. 'Thematic Options and Success'. In Butler, C. S., Cardwell, R. A. and Channell, J. (eds.) *Writing in Language and Literature -- Theory and Practice*. University of Nottingham Monographs in the Humanities.

Braddock, R., Lloyd-Jones, R. and Schoer, L. 1963. *Research in Written Composition*. Champaign, Ill. National Council of Teachers of English.

Brooks, E. 1985. 'Case studies of the composing processes of five "unskilled" English-as-second-language writer'. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. New York University.

Chelala, S. 1981. 'The composing process of two Spanish speakers and the coherence of their texts: A case study'. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. New York University.

Davies, F. 1989. Paper presented at the 1989 Institute of Language in Education, International Conference, Hong Kong.

Dudley-Evans, T. 1987. 'Genre Analysis and E.S.P.'. *ELR Journal* 1. Birmingham University.

Elbow, P. 1973. *Writing without teachers*. New York: O.U.P.

Elbow, P. 1981a. *Embracing contraries: Explorations in Learning and Teaching*. New York: O.U.P.

Elbow, P. 1981b. *Writing with power: Techniques for mastering the writing process*. New York: O.U.P.

Emig, J. 1971. *The composing processes of twelfth graders*. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English.

Faigley, L. and Witte, S. 1981. 'Analyzing Revision'. *College Composition and Communication* 32: 400-414.

Flower, L. 1989. *Problem solving strategies for writing*. 3rd ed. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Friedlander, A. 1990. 'Composing in English: Effects of a first language on writing in English as a second language'. In Kroll, B. (ed.) *Second Language Writing*. C.U.P.

Hayes, J. R. and Flower, L. 1983. 'Uncovering cognitive processes in writing: An introduction to protocol analysis'. In Mosenthal, P., Tamar, L. and Walmsley, S. A. (eds.) *Research in Writing*, pp. 206-220. New York: Longman.

Johns, Ann M. 1990. 'L1 composition theories: implications for developing theories of L2 composition'. In Kroll, B. (ed.) *Second Language Writing*. C.U.P.

Jones, S. 1982. 'Attention to rhetorical form while composing in a second language'. In Campbell, C., Flashner, V., Hudson, T. and Lubin, J. (eds.) *Proceedings of the Los Angeles Second Language Research Forum* 2: 130-143. Los Angeles: U.C.L.A.

Jones, S. 1985. 'Problems with monitor use in second language composing'. In Rose, M. (ed.) *Studies in writer's block and other composing process problems*, pp. 96-118. New York: Guilford Press.

Kelly, P. 1989. 'Theory, research and pedagogy in ESL writing'. In Candlin, C. N. and Mc Namara, T. F. (eds.) *Language Learning and Community*, pp. 77-90. National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, Macquarie University, Sydney.

Krashen, S. D. 1984. *Writing: Research, theory and application*. Pergamon Institute of England.

Lay, N. 1982. 'Composing processes of adult ESL learners'. *TESOL Quarterly* 16: 406.

Martin, J. R. 1985. 'Intervening in the process of writing development'. In Painter, C. and Martin, J. R. (eds.) *Writing to mean: Teaching genres across the curriculum.* Occasional Papers No. 9. Applied Linguistics Association of Australia.

Martin-Bettancourt, M. 1986. 'The composing processes of Puerto Rican college students of English as a second language'. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Fordham University.

Moore, H. 1987. 'Process, outcome and language education: a discussion'. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics* 10/2: 128-62.

Perl, S. 1978. 'Five Writers Writing: Case studies of the composing processes of unskilled college writers'. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, New York University

Pianko, S. 1979. 'A description of the composing process of college freshman writers'. *Research in the Teaching of English* 13: 5-22.

Raimes, S. 1985. 'What unskilled writers do as they write. A classroom study of composing'. *TESOL Quarterly* 19: 229-258.

Rorchach, E. 1986. 'The effects of reader awareness: A case study of three ESL student writers'. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. New York University.

Swales, J. M. 1990 *Genre Analysis*. C.U.P.

Zamel, V. 1982. 'Writing: The process of discovering meaning'. *TESOL Quarterly* 10: 67-76.

Zamel, V. 1983. 'The composing processes of Advanced ESL students: Six case studies'. *TESOL Quarterly* 17: 165-187.

Zamel, V. 1987. 'Recent research on writing pedagogy.' *TESOL Quarterly* 21: 697-715.

HONGKONG PAPERS IN LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE TEACHING 14 (1991)

Contents of Hongkong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching, Nos. 1-13.

No. 1 May 1979

Bilingual Education in Hong Kong: A Historical Perspective	Gail Schaeffer Fu	1
A Report on an Assessment of the Standard of English of Pupils in Hong Kong	Yu Fong Ying	20
A Survey of Student On-Course Language Requirements for Diploma and Ordinary Certificate Courses Conducted by the Hong kong Polytechnic and the Technical Institutes	David Foulds	38
Review of *Nucleus (English for Science and Technology) Engineering*. Tony Dudley-Evans, Tim Smart and John Wall. Longman, 1978	Graham Low	65
Review of *Acoustical Studies of Mandarin Vowels and Tones.* John Marshall Howie. Cambridge University Press, 1976	Angela Fok	77

No. 2 December 1979

Babbling and Early Language in Cantonese	Laurent Sagart	1
Some preliminaries to a Proposal to Assist (Underdeveloped) L_2 Readers across Morphographemic/Alphabetic Systems	Grace Wiersma	7
Designing an English Proficiency Test for Engineering Students - the Direct Test Approach	Lee Yick Pang	14
Some Notes Concerning the Likerts' Model of 'The Human Organization' as Applied to the Management of Classroom Language Learning	Donald Morrison	27

No. 3 July 1980

Participle Preposing in English and the Problem of Hierarchical Constraints on Linguistic Structure ... Benjamin K. T'sou 1

Skyscraper. Skyscraper. Skyscraper: Some New Perspectives on Monitoring and the Language Learner ... Graham Low and Donald Morrison 30

Professional Activities by the Language Centre and Centre Staff ... 54

Publications by Members of Staff ... 57

Visitors to the Language Centre ... 60

No. 4 June 1981

Communicative Testing as an Optimistic Activity ... Graham Low 1

Some Notes on Internal Consistency Reliability Estimation for Tests of Language Use ... Lee Yick Pang 19

The Use of Cloze Procedure in the Form III English Language Secondary School Scaling Testing ... R. Keith Johnson 28

The Effects of the Shifting of Instructional Medium of Students' Performance in Selected Anglo-Chinese Secondary Schools in Hong Kong ... Peter T.K. Tam 48

F.L.T.S.: The English Language Testing Service of the British Council and the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate ... Peter Falvey 78

Language Centre On-going Activities in Language Testing ... 96

No. 5 February 1982

Measuring Reading Achievement in a Bilingual Situation ... ... Angela Fok 1

Validating a Course in Reading for Academic Purposes... ... ... Lee Yick Pang 22

The Project on English Language Proficiency Testing: An Outline ... ... Graham Low and Lee Yick Pang 28

Review of *Communicate in Writing*, K. Johnson, Longman, 1981 ... ... Evelyn Cheung 41

Report on the Use of Student Self-Assessment in the Testing Programmes of the Language Centre, University of Hong Kong ... ... Lee Yick Pang 50

Report on the Use of Student Feedback in a Testing Programme ... ... Graham Low 52

No. 6 October 1982

Hong Kong Cantonese: A Sociolinguistic Perspective ... ... Peter G. Pan 1

Some Aspects of the Teaching of Writing Skills ... ... Yang Wong Yuen Chun 17

On Devising a Putonghua Course for Cantonese Speakers ... ... Liang Ya Ling 22

Storying: A Methodological Approach to Bilingual Education ... ... Nancy Lee 25

No. 7 December 1983

ESL Curriculum Innovation and Teacher Attitudes	Richard Young and Sue Lee	1
Some Thoughts on the Relationship between Teacher Attitudes and Teacher Styles	Margaret Falvey	18
Co-operating with the Learner: A Preliminary Report on Researching Learners' Problems with Processing Text	John Hunt	44
Varying Interpertation: A Pilot Study Using A Triangulated procedure	Cheng Ngai-lung	56
Intensive Learning of Vocabulary in the Teaching of Chinese	Lee Hok-ming	74
Relationship between Word Attributes and Word Learning of Chinese	Siu Ping-kee	85

No. 8 February 1985

Levels and Labels in Language Teaching	Graham Low	1
Prototype Theory, Cognitive Linguistics and Pedagogical Grammar	Keith Johnson	12
Designing 'Communicative' 'Self-Study' Materials for Language Learning	Susan Fearn	25
Discourse and the Teaching of Intonation	Elizabeth Samson	45
Connectives; On the Other Hand, Who Needs Them, Though?	William Crewe, Christina Wright and Matthew Leung Wing Kwong	61
Linguistic Attitudes of Chinese Adolescents in Hong Kong	Gail Fu, Vincent Cheung, Paul Lee Lai Min, Lee Sik Yum and Herbert Pierson	76
Review of *Language For Literature (A Guide to Language Use, Style and Criticism)*, by Richard Walker. Collins, ELT. Announcements. 1983	Martin Anderson	93

No. 9 April 1986

Towards an Algorithm for the Analysis of Written English Test ... Lee Yick Pang 1

Subject and Topic in Four Narratives ... W.J. Crewe 14

Structure in Written Text ... Evelyn Gaik-Hoon Cheung 33

The Reading Teacher's Dilemma ... Margaret Falvey 44

Teaching Information Sequence in Scientific Writing to Primary ESL Pupils in Singapore ... Robert Heath 58

Strategies in Understanding Written Discourse with Special Reference to Translator-as-Reader ... Helen Oi-wah Chau 69

Review of *Linguistic Prediction in Economics Text*, Angela Tadros, ELR, University of Birmingham, 1985 ... Elizabeth Samson 81

No. 10 April 1987

Bilingual Seondary Education in Hong Kong: What Are the Options? ... Ora Kwo 1

Bilingual Education in the United States: A Historical Perspective of the Myths, Misconceptions and Attitudes Affecting Educational Policies and Practices ... Gloria Zarabozo 11

Teaching Chinese Students to Read and Write about Western Literature: A Study of Two Sophomore Writing Classes in National Taiwan University ... Max L. Hui-Bon-Hoa 41

Applying Language Acquisition Theories to the Teaching of Mandarin-Chinese as a Foreign Language: A Case Study ... Liu Xiabing 48

No. 11 April 1988

Authorial Intentions and Discourse Interpretation	Desmond Allison	1
Teacher Training in China and the Role of Teaching Practice	Bruce James Morrison	16
Relative Clauses, Relative Pronouns and Hong Kong English	Mark Newbrook	25
Communicative Dynamism in Expository Academic English: Some Strategies in Teaching the Pragmatics of Writing	Nigel J. Bruce	42
Cultural Considerations in the Selection of ESL Reading Texts	William Crewe and Keith S.T. Tong	54
Pedagogical and Para-Pedagogical Levels of Interaction in the Classroom: A Social Interactional Approach to the Analysis of the Code-Switching Behaviour of a Bilingual Teacher in an English Language Lesson	Angel M. Y. Lin	69
Classroom Interaction Research and the Foreign Language Classroom	Margaret Falvey	88
Review of *Dialects in Contact*, Peter Trudgill, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986	Mark Newbrook	106

Special Issue - M. A. Dissertations 1978 - 87

A Study of the Communicative Strategies Used by Sixth-Form Students in Small Group Discussion	Belinda Kwok	1
Why and When do we Correct Learner Errors? -- An Error Correction Project for an English Composition Class	Kwok Hong Lok	11
Constraints on Intrasentential Code-Mixing in Cantonese and English	Leung Yin Bing	23
An Investigation into the Sociolinguistic Competence of Hong Kong University Students With Specific Reference to 'Marking Complaints'	Maria Piotrowska	41
A Study of Language Attitudes in Hong Kong: Cantonese Speakers' response to English and Cantonese on the Telephone	Betty Jean Gran	58
Speech in Harold Pinter's *The Caretaker*	Lesley Clark	74
Summaries of the Dissertations Produced for the M.A. in Language Studies: 1978 - 1987		82

No. 12 April 1989

The Revision Process in Academic Writing: From Pen and Paper to Word Processor	Stephen Chadwick and Nigel Bruce	1
Sentence Sequence and Coherence: In Search of Readers' Problems in Academic Discourse	Desmond Allison	29
Plural Marking in Hong Kong English	Carol Budge	39
A Reading Experiment with L_2 Readers of English in Hong Kong - Effects of the Rhetorical Structure of Expository Texts on Reading Comprehension	Rebecca W.K. Foo	49
Quis Custodiet ... ? Errors in Guides to English Usage for Hong Kong Students	Mark Newbrook	63
Review of *Code-Mixing and Code Choice: A Hong Kong Case Study* by John Gibbons	Mark Newbrook	77

No. 13 1990

Language in Education: Hard Choices for Hong Kong	Jo Lewkowicz	1
EL2 - Medium Education in a Largely Monolingual Society: The Case of Hong Kong	Nigel Bruce	9
A Programme for Semantics	Laurence Goldstein	25
Semantics and Its Critics (a comment)	Roy Harris	35
Semantic Shamantics (a reply)	Laurence Goldstein	41
Reading - Aloud Speed as a Factor in Oral Fluency and General Language Proficiency?	David Coniam	47
Notions of 'Error' and Appropriate Corrective Treatment	Nancy Lee	55
Errors in Focus? Native and Non-native Perceptions of Error Salience in Hong Kong Student English - A Case Study	Mark Newbrook	71

Errata (Issue 13)

P. 75, in Table 2: The correct value for sentence structure is "27", and not "1".

P. 78: The penultimate sentence should refer to "cases such as V.9", and not to "cases such as V.10".

To: The Editors
Hongkong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching
c/o The Language Centre
University of Hong Kong
Pokfulam Road
Hong Kong

Please send me a copy of *Hongkong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching*. I enclose postal order/draft/cheque for 1 issue (HK$30.00 or US$5.00). (Cheques should be crossed and made payable to the University of Hong Kong). Please send the copy to:

(Please print) Name: ______________________

Address: ______________________
____
____
____

Signature: ______________________

Date: ______________________

Amount enclosed: HK$ ___________ US$ ___________

* Delete where appropriate

LINGUISTICS, LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH: 1991-1992 CONFERENCES

November 23-24, 1991: "CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION"

8th Annual Conference of the H.K. Educational Research Association

at Hong Kong Baptist College
224 Waterloo Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

for information, contact:

Dr. Chan Cham Kit Jack
Secretary, Conference Organising Committee
HKERA
c/o Centre for Educational Development
Hong Kong Baptist College
224 Waterloo Road, Kowloon
Hong Kong

December 17-19, 1991: "QUILT AND QUILL: MAINTAINING AND ACHIEVING QUALITY IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING."

7th H.K. Institute of Language in Education
International Conference

at the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre, Wan Chai, H.K.

for information, contact:

Dr. Verner Bickley
Director, Institute of Language in Education
2 Hospital Road
Hong Kong

April 20-23, 1992: "LANGUAGE TEACHER EDUCATION IN A FAST-CHANGING WORLD"

RELC Regional Seminar

at SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, Republic of Singapore.

for information, contact:

The Director (Attention: Seminar Secretariat)
SEAMEO Regional Language Centre
30 Orange Grove Road
Singapore 1025
Republic of Singapore

香港大學語文研習所

語言理論教學研究

十四